ARGOSY

MARCH, 1957

Price in SOUTH AFRICA,
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND
TWO SHILLINGS
and THREEPENCE

VICTOR CANNING

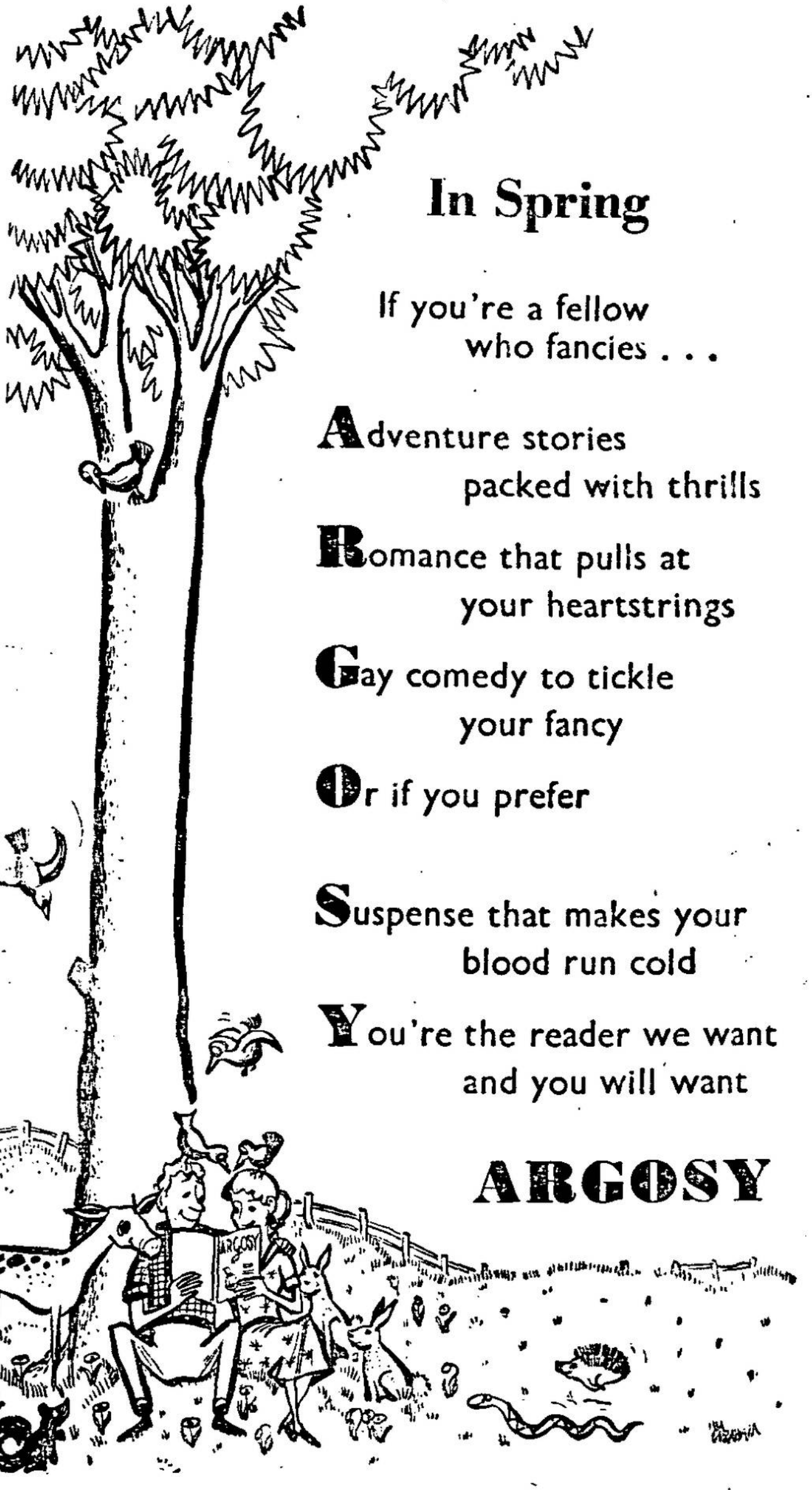
MARK DERBY ARTHUR GORDON

THE SHORT STORY MAGAZINE

ARTHUR MAYSE

MICHAEL GILBERT

EDMUND GILLIGAN



In Spring

If you're a fellow
who fancies . . .

Adventure stories
packed with thrills

Romance that pulls at
your heartstrings

Gay comedy to tickle
your fancy

Or if you prefer

Suspense that makes your
blood run cold

You're the reader we want
and you will want

ARGOSY

Write for Profit in Spare Time

– If you are interested in writing as a profitable hobby you should send to-day for a free copy of the new edition of "How to Succeed as a Writer," the prospectus issued by the Regent Institute.

This informative, attractively produced booklet reveals that you can be trained to write articles and short stories in your spare time.

Hundreds of editors are in constant need of fresh contributions and pay liberally for good work.

Learn the essential technique by post—how to write, what to write about, how to prepare MSS. and HOW TO SELL THEM for the best prices.

Write to-day to The Regent Institute (Dept. AR/28C), Palace Gate, London, W.8, for the free booklet, and enclose a stamp to cover postage. There is no obligation.

By applying promptly you will have the opportunity of enrolling at very moderate terms. Many students earn the fee several times over during tuition.

Some of the Contents of "HOW TO SUCCEED AS A WRITER"

This valuable and interesting booklet, packed with up-to-date information, covers these (among other) subjects : **WHAT EDITORS WANT ; THE SCOPE FOR NEW WRITERS; SHORT STORY OPENINGS; PUPILS' SUCCESSES ; THE RECOMMENDED COURSES.**

There are many people who, as a result of sending for this booklet, are now earning considerable sums in leisure hours. Students have been enabled to:

Sell their articles, short stories, etc., to more than 1,650 publications.
Contribute extensively to radio programmes.
Have a large number of books accepted.

If you want training that matches your enthusiasm, generous personal service that meets your every need, send for the prospectus now—while you think of it.

Post Coupon to-day for FREE BOOKLET

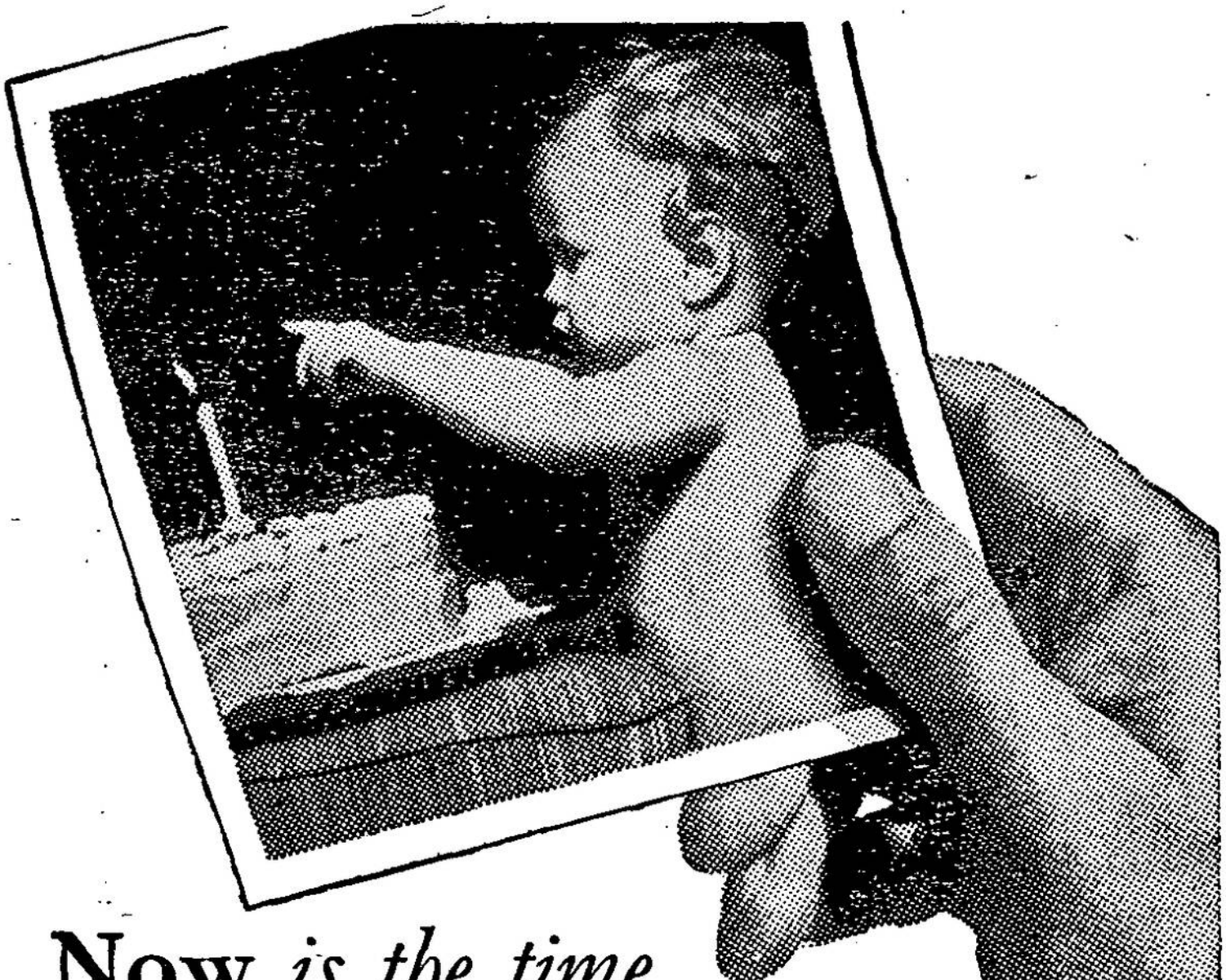
THE REGENT INSTITUTE (Dept. AR/28C)
PALACE GATE, LONDON W.8.

Please send me a free copy of the prospectus, HOW TO SUCCEED AS A WRITER—without obligation. I enclose a $2\frac{1}{2}$d. stamp.

NAME .....
(BLOCK LETTERS)

ADDRESS .....

★ *Even if you are not interested at the moment, send for this booklet now so that you may have it available for reference*



Now *is the time to provide for his* education

SOON ENOUGH, your one-year-old-today will be off to school. And soon enough, unless there is some practical planning beforehand—which means NOW—school fees could look impossibly large to you.

So let us be practical. Now is the time to provide for the education of your very young son or daughter: now, if you are wise, you will turn to insurance to give the financial foundation to your present hopes and plans for the children.

Take out the Standard Public Schools Policy now, and much of the educational expense to come will be conveniently thinned out over the years before the child goes to school. And, even if you died tomorrow, his or her education still stays a certainty.

THE STANDARD

'Yours for Life'

LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY

Established 1825

Head Office: 3 **GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH**

London Offices: 3 ABCHURCH YARD, CANNON STREET, E.C.4 15a PALL MALL, S.W.1

SL126C

ARGOSY

Contents for March, 1957

Vol. XVIII **No. 3**

		Page
Log Book		4
Illustrations by Graham		
Sporting Chance	**Arthur Gordon**	7
Nosegay		18
Illustration by Pat Craddock		
The excerpt from "Beerbohm Tree," by courtesy of Methuen and Company		
Helen Among the Flames	**Patrick Ryan**	19
Runaway	**Arthur Mayse**	27
"Dressing Down," by permission of Methuen and Company		
Little Tin God (Science Fiction Choice)	**Jay Williams**	39
"Off the Rails," by courtesy of Hutchinson and Company		
At Pencil Point		47
Mother Knows Best		48
Illustration by George Adamson		
The poem by H. H. Bashford from "Best Poems of 1924," by permission of Thomas Moult; "Decent Easy Men," by courtesy of James Barrie; "Lay That Pistol Down!" by permission of Michael Joseph		
Sauce for a Sailor	**Edmund Gilligan**	51
Dual Control	**Berkely Mather**	61
Cash in Hand	**Michael Gilbert**	73
Touch of Magic		82
Illustrations by Margaret Sweeney		
"Brave Music," by courtesy of Jonathan Cape; "Sun-kissed," by permission of Ernest Benn; "Unmasked," by courtesy of Macdonald and Company; "Bright Vision," by permission of the Literary Trustees of Walter de la Mare, and Faber and Faber; "Vanished Splendour," by courtesy of Secker and Warburg		
Creeping Shadow	**Mark Derby**	85
King of Positano	**Félicien Marceau**	95
Translated from the French by J. E. Malcolm		
I Love You, Bronwen	**Hugh Michael Hogan**	105
Manasco Road (Last Part)	**Victor Canning**	111
Illustration by Michie		
Argosy Crossword		144

Printed in England by PERCY BROTHERS, LTD., THE HOTSPUR PRESS, MANCHESTER, and published on the 10th of each month by THE AMALGAMATED PRESS, LTD., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for Transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription Rates: Inland, £1 8s. for 12 months, 14s. for 6 months. Overseas: except Canada, £1 6s. 6d. for 12 months, 13s. 3d. for 6 months Canada: £1 5s. 6d. for 12 months, 12s. 9d. for 6 months. ADVERTISEMENT OFFICES: Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. GORDON & GOTCH, LTD.; South Africa, CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY, LTD.; Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Messrs. KINGSTONS, LTD.

ARGOSY is sold subject to the following conditions, namely, that it shall not, without the written consent of the publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorized cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

ARGOSY Log Book

IT is old stuff nowadays to drift across an ocean in a frail craft single-handed; dozens of people have done it, and passers-by in large cities may gaze at their dinghies, sloops, and catamarans displayed in big stores. Indeed, the window-dressers must bless these vessels which, however small, make a nice easy fill-up for a shop window, leaving no space for anything else—the only other objects with this useful quality are the latest types of vacuum cleaner resembling immense balls and chains.

It is plain that ocean-drifting as a sport has come to stay, and its heroic legends will soon find their way into modern mythology; that is, into advertising strips: "Oh Edie, I'm so miserable. Jack never comes to see me any more and he hasn't invited me to drift to Tierra del Fuego with him in the *Halleycom*."

"Well, Jill, I'm sorry, of course, but I can't say I'm surprised." (These advisers never sound *really* sorry.) "Have you stopped to look at your doormat? Covered with bits of fluff, it is. Why not get a Whizzo cleaner?" And so, Whizzo every morning . . .

"Jill, I've been meaning to say this for ages . . . will you come

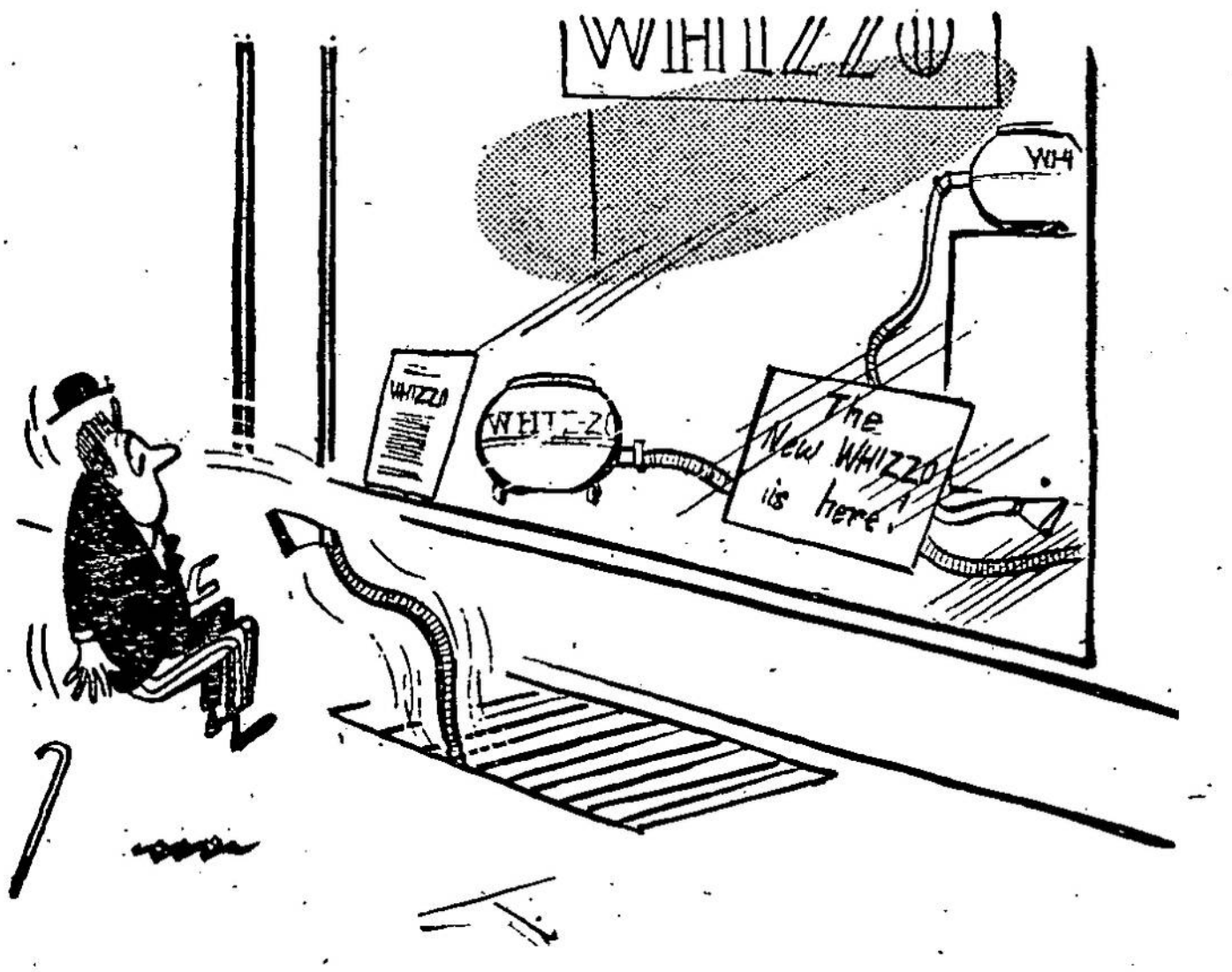
with me on the *Halleycom*? No one but you could keep it so country-fresh."

"Why, Jack, I—I'd love to—if I can bring my Whizzo with me." And the last picture shows them uncomfortably crowded at one end of the spotless dinghy with Whizzo taking up most of the deck-space.

Or, of course, Jill's friend Edie (who should probably have been drowned at birth) might have said to her, "Well, Jill dear, I don't quite know how to say this, but you haven't much mental appeal, have you? After all, when Dr. Bombard drifted, he took Molière, Rabelais, Cervantes, Nietzsche, Aeschylus in two languages, Spinoza, Montaigne, and musical scores of Bach and Beethoven with him. What have *you* got to offer Jack?"

Here Jill, who is a girl of spirit, pulls out this month's Argosy which fits nicely into a rubber dinghy; no Plimsoll line was ever submerged by Gilbert, Gilligan, Gordon, or Derby.

Short stories, like escalators, should carry you away with the first sentence—look at two or three opening sentences by your favourite Argosy authors and you'll see what we mean. We offer a two-guinea prize for the first two sentences from an imaginary story. Block capitals on a postcard, please. Send to The Editor, Argosy, The Fleetway House, London, E.C.4 by March 10. Results of December competition on page 104.



Arthur Mayse was born in Manitoba in 1912 and says he has spent much of his life outdoors; however, some time was put in as a magazine fiction editor in Toronto and Vancouver. He now lives in British Columbia, partly because the fishing there is supergood; thirty-pound salmon splashing about five minutes from his front door account for some of the full stops and new paragraphs in his stories. He has written two adventure novels, *Desperate Search* and *Perilous Passage*, the latter filmed by M.G.M. He is married, has one son, one daughter, all fishfond.

Félicien Marceau, who was born in France in 1913, had the unusual experience of being captured by Germans at the age of one year, along with his mother, aunts, and grandparents. Captivity lasted two days. He has spent many years in Italy, now lives in Paris. During his literary career he has won several prizes, the latest being the Prix Interallié in 1956 for *Les Elans du Cœur.*

Berkely Mather is the pseudonym that hides the identity of a Colonel on the active list in the Middle East; nothing cloak-and-daggerish about this, he says, just a matter of military etiquette. Born in Sydney, he set out to see the world with a hundred pounds in his pocket at the age of twenty-one. He sailed in tramp steamers for a time, joined the army in 1932, has served on the Indian north-west frontier, and in the Far East and Burma. He has had fourteen plays televised. He likes fast cars, sailing, and shooting.

Jay Williams was born in New York in 1914, is married, with two children. He says he had an early brush with the theatre, began writing in 1942. *A Change of Climate* and *The Good Yoeman* came out over here last year. JOHN SILVER

SPORTING CHANCE

He had no option
he had to kill to live

BY ARTHUR GORDON

DRIVING along the icy roads through the pre-dawn darkness, Ives had been affable and talkative, almost excessively so. But once they were in the motor boat, he had become silent, withdrawn, hostile.

He stood now with his back immovably turned on Dixon, one gloved hand on the steering-wheel, the other gripping the rim of the canvas spray hood. Occasionally, as the boat plunged, a whiplash of freezing brine would strike his face—Dixon could hear the vicious slap—but Ives never flinched, never turned his head. He just stood there, feet planted wide, big shoulders hunched, staring into the dark.

Huddled uncomfortably in the stern, Dixon said above the throbbing of the engine, " I hope you know where we are. I can't see a blessed thing! "

Ives made no reply, but he spun the wheel, the boat's frantic bucking eased a bit, and Dixon knew they must be in the lee of the island. He pushed aside the gun cases, came up on his knees, and finally he saw it—a low line of blackness with pale smears that marked the shallow dunes. A strip of sand and marsh grass half a mile long, perhaps a hundred yards wide. On one side, the ocean. On the other side, the bay. This was the island; this was it.

The motor boat came to a cove formed by two projecting arms of marsh grass and crept into it cautiously. Ives cut the engine. They coasted forward so quietly that Dixon could hear the skim ice breaking under the prow. He said, " Pretty fancy navigating, Paul."

The remark did not call for an answer, but even so, the silence seemed tense, uncomfortable. Ahead of them there was a faint splash, followed by a whir of wings. Dixon said, a shade too heartily, " Well, there are a few around. How're we fixed for time? I could do with a cup of coffee before we start."

Ives spoke for the first time since leaving the mainland. " There's plenty of time—for one of us."

Dixon sank back slowly on his heels. He was aware, suddenly, of the thudding of his heart. Too loud and too fast for a man who had been doing nothing but sit in a boat. When he spoke, his voice sounded rough.

" What do you mean—one of us? "

Ives dropped the ignition key into his pocket. He picked up the bow rope and made it fast to a mooring-post driven deep into the frozen mud. He turned, scooped up the gun cases and the rucksack. There was a queer precision about the way he did these things, as if every move had been carefully rehearsed in his mind. He said, " I'll open the cabin."

He moved away, footsteps loud at first as his boots crushed the ice-sheathed grasses, then fainter as he reached the sand that blanketed the higher ground. Finally there was no sound but the keening of the wind and the dull roar of the breakers on the far side of the island.

Jeff Dixon shook his head suddenly, as if trying to drive certain unwelcome thoughts out of it. But the memory of Sally Ives's telephone call kept coming back to him, the words she had spoken the evening before, the words and the urgency that lay behind them.

" Jeff . . . Jeff, this is Sally." Her voice had been low and hurried, as if she was afraid of being overheard. " Paul just told me he's taking you duck-shooting in the morning. Jeff, don't go with him; please don't go! Tell him something's turned up. Tell him you're sick. Tell him anything, but don't—"

" Now, Sally . . ." As always, he had found himself visualizing her almost too clearly—the soft chestnut hair, the smoke-grey eyes, the sensitive mouth. A lovely girl, a completely honest girl. Two years ago she had chosen to become Mrs. Paul Ives, not Mrs. Jeffrey Dixon. It had hurt at the time. But he was over it now. " Now, Sally," he had said, " this is the chance I've been waiting for. To get Paul alone for a while. Talk to him, persuade him to go to Dr. Collins for a complete check-up. There could be something physically wrong, you know. He'll be relaxed out there on the island. It'll be like old times. We—"

" Jeff, he's coming back. I've got to hang up. Please don't go with him! Please! "—

But he had come, regardless.

The sky in the east was lightening now; the stars were beginning to fade. Like old times, he had said. Well, in some ways it was. The island was the same. Nothing had changed here since the day, five years before, when Paul Ives had taken him on his first duck-shooting trip, had patiently explained the simple, unbreakable rules of sportsmanship, had coached him through three

seasons until he became a fine wing-shot, almost as expert with a twelve-gauge as Paul himself.

For three years they had gone shooting together, had worked in the same big law firm. Then Jeff had gone into practice on his own. Soon after that, Paul had married Sally.

Jeff had kept away from them at first—not out of jealousy, but simply because it hurt him to be near Sally, knowing she belonged to another man. Time had blunted that feeling; he had seen more of them in the past few months. More of Sally, at least. Paul had been out of town frequently, working on a difficult case in the State capital. Working much too hard, really . . .

Through the darkness a square of light glowed suddenly: Ives had lit the oil lamp in the tiny cabin that was the island's only shelter. Dixon stood up stiffly.

Sally's imagination was running away with her; that was all. By this time, probably, Paul was brewing the coffee and wondering what was keeping his companion.

But Ives was not brewing coffee. He sat at one end of the oil-cloth-covered table, waiting. His shotgun, assembled, lay before him. The peak of his cap left his eyes in shadow. Slanting down from the lamp overhead, yellow light winked on the brass heads of five shotgun shells in the centre of the table. He nodded towards the other chair. " Sit down."

Dixon hesitated and then sat down warily. The cabin was piercingly cold. When he spoke, he could see his breath steam in the tawny light. " What's the matter with you, Paul? What's on your mind? "

Ives said, not moving, " You know what's on my mind."

Dixon put his hands flat on the table. He was not a big man, not nearly so big as Ives, but he was six years younger and there was a lithe, whiplash quality about him. At college he had been a useful heavyweight. He weighed about eleven and a half stone now, but none of it was fat.

He said, " Sally told me you were getting some funny ideas. I didn't believe her."

Ives said, " You didn't think I knew, eh? "

Dixon said flatly, " There's nothing to know."

The big man said, " You love her, don't you? " It was a statement, not a question.

For half a second Dixon hesitated, wondering if he could honestly deny it. " Sally's your wife, Paul. She loves you."

Ives clenched his fist slowly. " That's what you'd like me to think, isn't it? "

" Listen," Dixon said, " if she weren't in love with you, I

think I'd know it. And if I knew it, I might try to take advantage of it. But—"

"Haven't you?" said Ives.

Dixon felt a spark of anger begin to glow in him. "You know damn well I haven't!"

"Do you deny you've been seeing a lot of her lately?"

"I've seen a lot of both of you!"

"Where were you last Monday night?"

"Monday night? Why, at the Millers', for dinner. They . . ."

"You brought Sally home, didn't you?"

"Why, yes. Yes, I did. What of it? You were out of town. I was just trying to be . . ."

"As it happened," Ives said, "I came back. I was at home when Sally appeared—at two in the morning. I made it my business to find out when you two left the Millers'. You left at midnight."

Dixon leaned back and laughed.

"You're being childish, Paul. We had a flat tyre on our way back. I couldn't get the jack to work. Sally must have told you. We had to . . ."

"She told me, all right. Where were you on Wednesday at five-thirty?"

"Wednesday?"

"Don't try to hedge," Ives said grimly. "My informant is pretty reliable."

Dixon remembered then. "I gave Sally a drink—I suppose that's what you mean. At the Game Cock. At her request."

Ives said, "Naturally."

"Well," said Dixon, "since you know so much, you might as well know the rest of it. She called me up because she wanted to talk to me. She was worried. She was worried about you."

Ives sat there behind the shotgun, gigantic, motionless. He said nothing.

Dixon leaned forward. "She said she thought you were working too hard, that lately you hadn't been yourself. That you always had been—well, possessive, but that now you were actually beginning to have delusions. That you were insanely jealous. And that I was the main target of your jealousy."

Still Ives said nothing. His mouth looked tight, unyielding, and Dixon felt suddenly that the mind of the man across the table was closed, locked like a steel trap on a single idea, a single obsession, and that nothing would change it. Even so, he tried again.

"Look, Paul, I think you ought to go and see Dr. Collins. Maybe it's just overwork. Maybe it's something else. But Sally's right—you're not yourself. You remind me of some of

the combat fatigue cases I saw during the war. Those fellows would get hold of some crazy notion and—"

" It's no use trying to talk your way out of this," Ives said. " Two of us came over here. One's going back. No, don't interrupt; I've thought enough about this. You'll never have Sally as long as I'm there because I'll never divorce her. But I'll never have her as long as you're there, either. Not fully. Not completely. Not the way I want her."

" You're mad! " Dixon stood up. " I'm going back to the mainland! "

" How? " said Ives. " Are you going to swim? " He reached out and swivelled the shotgun around so that the twin muzzles, sightless and ominous, stared at Dixon. " I'm the host out here; I always provide the ammunition, right? There's your supply on the table. I have the same, no more and no less. They're Number 2's—they'll stop a goose at fifty yards. But a man is different; I'd say the killing range would be under fifteen yards. The closer the better, actually—like this, see? "

The muzzles swung away from Dixon. With a stunning roar, a tongue of flame leapt from the right barrel. In the wall of the cabin a ragged hole appeared, perhaps three inches across. " That leaves me four shells," Ives said. " You still have five."

The sudden blast had left Dixon half dazed. He stood there, ears ringing, the acrid smell of cordite in his nostrils. " For heaven's sake, Paul . . ."

But Ives was standing up. " I'm going to the north end of the island. Now. When it's light enough, I'll fire one shot. Then I'm coming after you. If I get you, I'll claim it was an accident. If you get me, I'd advise you to do the same. I'd also advise you not to hole up here in the cabin. I'd hate to burn it down. But I'll do it if I have to."

Dixon said hoarsely, " If you're as crazy as this, why don't you shoot me now and be done with it? "

Ives said, " I've never shot anything in my life that didn't have a sporting chance. Why make an exception of you? " He pushed open the door. For a moment he stood there, his eyes as hard as glass. Then the door slammed. He was gone.

Dixon cried, " Paul—wait! " He sprang forward and wrenched open the door. Nothing. Nothing but the cold and the darkness already greyish with the steel-coloured light of dawn.

Dixon turned back into the cabin. His mouth was dry; he felt as if iron bands were compressing his chest, making it difficult to breathe. His brain seemed numb, it functioned with agonizing nightmare slowness. But one thing was clear. Whatever the

cause—nerve-strain, brain tumour, blind animal jealousy—Ives was no longer a rational human being.

Sally had known it. Sally had tried to warn him. And he had ignored her. Now he was trapped on this frozen sand-pit with a homicidal maniac who had combined a madman's cunning with a sportsman's hunting instinct in this fantastic duel.

Hurry, said a desperate voice inside Dixon, hurry, while there's still time! But he stood there, paralysed, not knowing what action to take. In his ears he heard the heavy, uneven thudding of his heart. He knew the cause well enough—adrenalin, pouring into his bloodstream, conditioning his body for fight or flight. Flight? That was impossible. Ives had the key to the motor boat's engine in his pocket. The wind was blowing straight on-shore. Even if Dixon pushed the boat off, tried to drift away, the wind would push him back.

He glanced around wildly as if looking for some solution, some miraculous source of aid. The cabin was barely twelve feet square. It contained a pair of wooden bunks, a table, three chairs, a stove. In one corner, a pile of decoys. In another, an ancient washstand with basin and pitcher below an old-fashioned rectangular mirror.

The east and west walls had windows; through the salt-crusted panes Dixon could see the light filtering into the sky. Faster now. The north wall had no window. Ives could walk up behind that wall with a handful of dry marsh grass, strike a match . . .

Abruptly the spark of anger in Dixon exploded into fury. What had he done to be hounded like this, hunted down, given the miserable choice of killing or being killed? Perhaps he was still in love with Sally Ives; perhaps the elemental male in him did still want her for himself. But he was no thief; he hadn't tried to trespass or to steal. By profession he was a defender of laws, not a breaker of them. Well, the oldest law of all was the right to resist aggression, the law of self-preservation, the law of self-defence.

With fingers that shook a little, he unbuckled the flap of his sheepskin gun case and drew out the slim, deadly mechanism. He snapped it open, picked up two shells from the table, and thrust them home. The gun-metal was so cold that it seemed to burn his skin. He swept the other shells from the table, dropped them into his pocket. He reached up and extinguished the oil lamp. Standing there in the sudden darkness, he could see daylight through the hole that Ives had blasted in the cabin wall.

He closed the breech of his gun. The metallic snick sounded loud, final. And instantly, like an answer to a challenge, he heard the sullen roar of a twelve-gauge at the north end of the island.

The sound seemed to shake his mind free from the shackles that had been holding it; the shackles of fear, of rage, of indecision. If he was to survive this crisis, he would have to out-think Ives, outguess him. Ives was the better shot; he knew the island better; he *wanted* to kill or be killed. All the intangibles were on his side . . . except one. He would have to seek out the man he considered his enemy. He would have to find him before he could destroy him. That left Dixon with one clear advantage; he could choose the site of the final reckoning.

For perhaps ten seconds he stood motionless, weighing the possibilities. The ocean side of the island was no good; the dunes were too shallow, the grass too sparse for cover. A man trying to defend himself there could be outflanked, driven into the sea. On a point at the north end of the island there was a blind, a mere slit in the frozen mud that would be an almost impregnable position. But Ives—by design, no doubt—was between Dixon and that point. He would come down the middle of the island, slowly, carefully, making sure that his quarry did not slip past him in the ghostly light.

That left just two possibilities—the west blind or the one at the south end of the island.

The west blind was hopeless. It was raised on stilts, carefully camouflaged on the bay side, but wide open at the back. The south blind? Dixon hesitated. It was the best defensive position available; vegetation was thick there; the reeds and grasses grew tall. But if he committed himself to it, he would never get out; the island at that point was less than thirty yards wide.

The south blind. In his mind, Dixon could see it plainly—a pit floored with rough planks, open at both ends, with passages leading back through the tall reeds. Ives might come down either one of those passages; a man guarding one could hardly guard the other. Unless he could see round corners. Unless . . .

In two strides, Dixon was at the washstand in the corner. The rusted wire supporting the mirror broke with a snap. He whirled round, shotgun in one hand, mirror in the other. Crouching low, he ran from the cabin.

Outside, the wind struck him like an icy fist. Ives would be moving up against this wind, gun ready, mind so filled with jealousy and hatred that there was no room for anything else. The wind would aid him, too: sound carried better down-wind. The rattle of reeds might betray a hiding-place. The sound of a footstep might spell the difference between . . .

Dixon ran, bending low. Ives had three shells left. If he were within fifty or sixty yards, he might be tempted to use one. At that range, the charge would not stop a man, but it might blind

him. Dixon hunched his shoulders to protect his face, and a sickening knowledge came to him of how a duck must feel when it sees the shots rise out of the ground.

But no explosion came roaring out of the misty greyness. There was no sign of Ives.

The tall brown grasses that masked the south blind appeared. Abruptly Dixon halted, the terrifying thought occurring to him that perhaps Ives had lied, perhaps he had chosen to ambush him here. But then he remembered the warning shot from the far end of the island. It would have been impossible for Ives to come this far in so little time. Besides, such a trap would have violated the man's rigid concept of sportsmanship.

He chose the left-hand entrance, a narrow track that wound for perhaps fifty feet through a frozen jungle of reeds and cat-tails six to eight feet high. Off to the right, he knew, a similar trail existed. At the end of these two approaches was the blind itself, linking them like the bar of a trapeze suspended from two ropes.

The blind was empty. Dixon stood for a moment, leaning against the parapet. He was sweating inside his heavy clothing. Directly in front of the blind he could see the choppy expanse of water where many an unwary bird, fooled by the decoys, had fallen. Off to the left a long tongue of marsh grass jutted into the bay. Once a visiting sportsman had left the blind, had crept up on three black ducks feeding behind the grass, and had killed all three with a single shot—on the water. Dixon could still remember Ives's towering rage at this violation of the sportsman's code. He had called off the shoot, had put the offender in the motor boat, and had taken him back to the mainland.

With a shrill whistle of wings, a pair of pintail flashed over the blind. Dixon ducked, but it was too late; the birds saw him and flared wildly. Somewhere, he knew, Ives would be watching those birds, watching with narrowed eyes, reading a meaning in every move they made. Now Ives wouldn't have to guess where he was.

With frantic haste, Dixon began pulling the camouflage marsh grass from the right-hand corner of the blind. When the hole was large enough, he inserted the mirror, tilted it at an angle of forty-five degrees, and covered it with loose grass until it was virtually invisible. He backed away slowly until he was crouching in the left-hand corner of the blind. He put his gun down, went back, and adjusted the mirror once, twice, until it gave him what he wanted—a reflected view of the right-hand passage. Ives was right-handed; using this approach would enable him to swing his shotgun, fast, from right to left. As a crack wing-shot, he would be very much aware of this. Chances were five to one,

Dixon thought, that Ives would choose the right-hand approach to the blind itself. And if he did . . .

Breathing hard, Dixon walked six feet down the right-hand passage. He stopped, listening. Nothing. Nothing but the moaning of the wind, the restless lap of the water. Slowly he bent one of the tall grasses so that it formed a frail barricade. Then he went back to the spot where he had left his gun.

In the mirror he could see the bent reed dimly. It would do. It would do very well indeed. When Ives got to that point, nothing would separate hunter and hunted but a screen of reeds. Too thick to see through. But no barrier at all to a charge of heavy shot delivered at point-blank range. Ives would never see the mirror; his eyes would be riveted on the corner ahead of him.

But he would have no chance to turn that corner. One blast from Dixon's gun would cut him down where he stood.

And then? It would be homicide—justifiable homicide. He would not even have to pretend that it was an accident. With Sally to bear witness to her husband's mental condition, no jury on earth would bring in any other verdict.

Sally . . . He remembered her troubled face as he had seen it across the little table at the Game Cock. "Jeff," she had said, "I know Paul is wrong about us, terribly wrong. But he's my husband—I need him—I love him."

She loved her husband—but what if she had no husband? For the first time the full implications of the situation flashed into Dixon's mind. If Ives were dead, Sally would be free. And if Sally were free . . .

He gripped the gun more tightly. He must not think that way. If he did, if he allowed any other motive to enter his mind, it would no longer be self-defence. It would be something—uglier. He tried to thrust the concept away from him, but his legal mind was too stern, too uncompromising. It was trained in ethics, and now it gave him an evaluation he did not want. If, coveting his wife, he killed Paul Ives, it would not be a simple act of self-preservation. It would be murder.

Silently across the grey sky floated a great white bird, round-headed, with yellow, staring eyes. A snow-owl, from the arctic wastes. Now and then, driven by hunger, they came this far south. From under the peak of his cap, Dixon saw it. He did not make the slightest move. Even so, the owl tilted its great pinions suddenly and banked away. It had seen *something*; it had seen . . .

Ives. He came slowly down the right-hand passage, silently, one step at a time, placing his feet with the utmost care. In the mirror Dixon could not see his face clearly; he could see only the

bulky outline, the dull gleam of light on the gun barrels. On he came, one step at a time, nearer and nearer.

Dixon slid his right hand out of its glove. He did not have to shift his own weapon. His thumb moved a quarter of an inch, pushing off the safety catch. Under his forefinger the trigger felt smooth and cold and final. Ives moved forward, crouching a little, perfectly balanced, perfectly co-ordinated. He came to the reed bent across the path. His left hand reached out. Slowly, carefully, it began to push the obstacle aside.

Now, said a quivering, silent voice inside Dixon, *now!* He felt the message leave his brain, the nerve impulse ordering his trigger finger to release the firing-pin, to send the deadly charge tearing through reeds.

But something blocked the order. The finger did not tighten, and in the fractional moment of time left to him Dixon knew that he could not do it. He could not ambush and kill a human being.

The training and ethics and habits of a lifetime were too strong. He knew this, and in a blinding flash of insight he also knew that upon this type of conditioning hung his one chance for survival.

There was no time to think, only time to act. He sprang to his feet, tossing the shotgun away from him. Before it clattered on the floorboards of the blind, he had ducked into the left-hand passage. He stood there, frozen, for perhaps three seconds. Then he stepped back into the blind.

Ives stood at the far end, eyes narrowed, weapon poised. He said, in a voice choked with rage, " Pick up that gun, damn you! "

Dixon moved forward. He did not reach for his own gun; he stepped over it. He walked straight up to Ives. Deliberately, with his left hand, he pushed the threatening muzzles aside. Then he struck with his right. All the fear and fury, all his boxing skill, all the steel-spring tension in his body went into the blow. It caught Ives under his left ear with a sound like a cleaver hitting a block of wood. The big man's knees folded; the gun fell out of his hands. He went down on his face, suddenly boneless, like a gigantic rag doll.

Dixon looked at his right hand. The knuckles were split and bleeding. He began to laugh, a high-pitched, mirthless laugh that was close to hysteria. He said, " You couldn't do it, could you? No matter how much you wanted to, you couldn't shoot a sitting duck! "

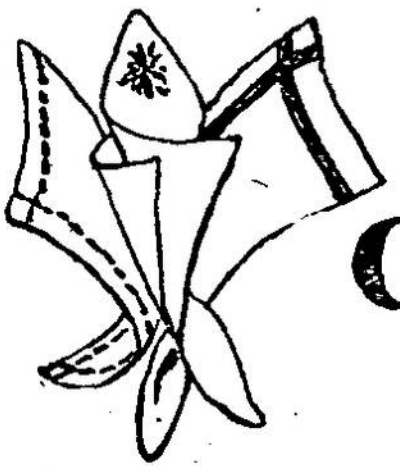
Abruptly he stopped laughing. He picked up Ives's gun, then his own, and sent them spinning into the reeds behind the blind. From Ives's coat pocket he drew the motor boat's ignition key. He hesitated, looking down at the motionless figure. It was true: he *was* in love with this man's wife. Perhaps he always would be.

But Sally loved Paul, wanted him, needed him . . .

And strangely, Jeff Dixon felt no regret. There came to him, rather, a tremendous feeling of relief and triumph. Not for his victory over Ives. For his conquest of himself.

He knelt down, rolled the big man over, and pulled him up to a sitting position. He began to shake him gently, insistently. " Come on, Paul," he said. " Wake up. Wake up. I'm going to take you home."

Any other tune you'd like to hear?

NOSE  GAY

Sneeze on a Monday, you sneeze for danger;
Sneeze on a Tuesday, you kiss a stranger.

Cold Cheer

A horrid chest, a raging head
The victim's sent upstairs to bed.
The bulletins in letters bold
Say Master's down with a bad cold.
With melancholy he fills his cup
And wonders when he can get *up*.
The doctors go and after tea
Master can dress, and later he
Gets up; and *down* he comes at last;
The cold recedes into the past.
Grammarian fetch your cap and gown,
How can a man be *up* and *down*?
The well of English undefiled
Still hides the truth and drives quite wild
The foreigner who seeks to know
The difference twixt Hi! and Lo!
Twixt *up* and *down* and *down* and *up*,
And how a can can be a cup.
The wretched man with frantic frown
Can look it *up* or turn it *down*.

MALCOLM LETTS, *Up and Down*

A Tissue of Invention

Tree's passion for realism took curious forms. He insisted that Charles Fulton, who played Caesar, should lie supine as the murdered man throughout the Forum scene, and refused to have a dummy for the purpose. Fulton protested that he suffered from colds in the winter and that the stage was draughty: "What will people say if the corpse sneezes?" Tree assuaged his fears: "They will call you Julius Cnaesar."

HESKETH PEARSON, *Beerbohm Tree*

HELEN AMONG THE FLAMES

A sudden red-gold fountain flared about her shining body

BY PATRICK RYAN

LOOK through the window past the green and gold and ruby bottles. Outside, the heat beats up to scorch the eyes and choke the breath, and the surrealist pageant of life in Rome flows incredibly by.

But it is always cool and shadowed inside the shop of Gaeleto and the air is sweet with the death of a myriad flowers. Five generations of Gaeleti have peddled perfumes here. You can't pay more anywhere in Europe; or buy better.

Old Paolo turned his head with difficulty against his hunchback to look up at the beautiful American lady. " And you wish to buy my best perfume, signora? But different perfumes are made for different purposes, and by what token shall we judge the best? "

The man beside her replied, " My wife wants the best you've got. The most expensive you've got. It don't matter what it costs, Helen, if you want it."

I felt sorry for him. He was fifty to her twenty-five, grey to her gold, and his eyes showed he knew that only his money held her to him.

Paolo grinned. " My most expensive perfume is sold to those ladies who are fat and old. For them it is the last resort. But the signora is in no such need." He searched along the ranks of bottles.

" Helen . . . Helen . . . Ah! " and he picked a black, elegant bottle. " This is the one. This is for the signora. So rare and strange that it can be worn only by the most lovely of women. And," he looked slyly at the husband, " among the most expensive in the world."

He placed a drop on a ground-glass wafer. The girl took it and held it to her face.

" It's lovely . . . just lovely," she said. Then she frowned a little. " And yet there's something queer . . . underneath all the

loveliness there's something frightening . . . kind of fierce and cruel." She picked up the bottle and looked at the label. It was in the shape of a curling red-gold flame. "That's what it is. Flames. Behind all the flowers there is the scent of fire."

"The signora is blessed with more than beauty," said Paolo. "The birth of this perfume was attended by both love and cruelty. It is called *Elena delle Fiamme*—how should we say in English?—*Helen among the Flames.* It is made only in the village of Cervacastro in the mountains of Emilia, where the secret of the process has been kept for five hundred years. But it is a long story, and the signora will have but little time—"

She took the black bottle in her hand and with a bitter little smile said, half to herself. "Helen among the Flames . . . I'd like to know about this other Helen. We've plenty of time. Tell me the story."

Paolo beamed. He beckoned them to pass behind the counter. In the alcove at the back there was a long low table and four leather chairs.

"Here we shall be a little private. The signora can rest and we will take coffee." He nodded to me. "You will please see that we are not disturbed."

I bowed gravely and moved up to his place at the big showcase.

Gaeleto placed the perfume on the table.

"The signora has by chance been through the province of Emilia? Perhaps to see the violets of Parma?"

"No. We've not been out of Rome yet."

He kissed his fingertips.

"You must go. You must drive up to Cervacastro and see the making of *Elena delle Fiamme.* The way is hard, but the effort will be repaid in beauty. All day you drive over the hot stones of the Apennines. Towards the head of the valley of the Magra where the village clings about the cruciform ruins of the abbey, you can see the formal patchwork of the cultivated perfume-gardens. Until 1524—the year of my story—the finest perfumes in Europe were made in the Abbey of Cervacastro. The monks made them by enfleurage, the ancient method which the people of the village use to this day."

"Enfleurage?" asked Helen. "It's a pretty word. What does it mean?"

The hunchback pointed to the elegant bottle. "In enfleurage the perfumer makes use of the capacity that oils and fats have for absorbing scents. The monks soaked long strips of felt in oil and laid them in narrow stone trays. The felt was covered with masses

of blossom, and every few hours, as the petals gave up their grace to the oil, fresh layers were strewn on the old. When the oil would absorb no more, the felt was taken out and squeezed between stone rollers. The oil was collected and mixed with water in great copper vats. Then it was heated until the essential spirit was carried away with the steam to be distilled into porcelain tanks, deep in the cellars of the abbey. There it would rest and refine until it was ready to be blended with the freshness of jonquil or rosemary and to take final bouquet as one of the fifteen famous perfumes of Cervacastro."

In the year 1524 there was a young monk living in the community of the abbey. He was twenty-three years of age, tall, fair, and handsome. He worked in the perfume-gardens, gathering the flowers and feeding the enfleurage trays. It was the custom of the abbey, on the sixth day of each week, to give to the villagers such of the surplus flowers as they needed for their feasts and devotions. And it was part of Sebastian's duties to make this weekly distribution from the hut near the gates.

Among those who came to ask for flowers was a village girl of eighteen years, named Elena. She was beautiful in face and body; her hair was black and her skin the colour of ripe corn. She found the young monk pleasing in her eyes and she had returned on each of the last eleven flower-days so that she might see and speak to him.

Sebastian's heart shivered within him as he watched the sensual grace of her young body and he knew the pain of desire; but he held firm to his vows and gave her no sign. On the twelfth day, she waited till all the others had gone before she entered. She was dressed in a brown robe, which was caught at the throat by a brooch of white metal, and gathered about her waist by a belt of red wool.

The first bloom was upon her and her breasts strained gently at her dress. The sunlight in the doorway shone through the cloth, silhouetting the curve and division of her thighs.

She asked for flowers for her patron saint. Sebastian took up an armful of campanulas. As she gathered them, a handful scattered to the floor. She stooped to pick them up, and there was a snapping sound, as the brooch at her throat sprang broken to the ground. The robe fell open beneath her outstretched arms and her body gleamed naked to the waist. For a moment, she stood still, bending a little, then she pulled the campanulas to her bosom.

The eyes of Sebastian gazed for the first time upon the body of a woman, watching the quiver beneath the skin as she hugged the

flowers to her breasts, the curved shadows and pale vein pattern flickering through the stems, the blue petals crushed against the pointing nipples . . .

"*The campanulas are indeed beautiful in the sunlight, Sebastian,*" she said softly, "*but they are yet more beautiful in the light of the moon . . .*" And she was gone.

The hunchback sat there miming the story, hugging imaginary flowers to his concave chest.

I caught his eye. I held my nose and made as if to spit on the floor. He snarled silently back.

Then he went on, spreading his hands.

"And who is to say whether she opened the brooch herself, or whether it was a trick of fate? Whichever it was, the end was the same"——

Sebastian was young. His blood beat hot and his flesh was proud upon his body. That night as Elena waited alone in the gardens of the abbey, at the spot where the campanulas bordered the soft lawns, he came to her. The flowers twisted and broke about the bodies of the lovers and filled the night with the perfume of their wounds.

Many nights, that summer, they met and loved in the place of the campanulas. But, as the roses came into their second bloom, a brother monk saw Sebastian as he stole from the sleeping abbey. Had they not been deaf to all but the whispers of their own passion, the lovers might have heard, the next night, small sounds and rustlings from the darkness of the trees.

But they sensed nothing, until the Abbot and four monks kindled their pine torches and a blaze of light flooded down upon the shining body of Elena . . .

Elena was tried as a witch, a woman who had schemed to win the soul of a monk for the Powers of Darkness. Sebastian was accused of breaking his vows before God, and of carnally knowing a woman upon consecrated ground. She was sentenced to be burnt at the stake; he, to be excommunicated, flogged, and driven out of the monastery. On the day of the burning he was to be placed near the stake so that he could behold clearly the death of the witch . . .

——Paolo's voice sank to a thrilling whisper. This was the part he liked best. His big scene. This was Irving and his *Bells* in our line of business——

As dawn stirred light across the square, the crowds began to gather. Round the stone pillar was collected a heap of faggots. To the slow throbbing of drums they brought Elena, weak with terror, dragging between the shoulders of her guards. When they

bound her to the pillar her body drooped in the chains. Sebastian, his head smeared with ashes, was placed some twenty feet from the faggots. His arms were bound and he was flanked by two soldiers

The drums stopped. No man breathed.

A trumpet dazzled the silence, and the executioner circled the pile, putting fire to the brushwood. Small bright jewels sprang up to mark his passing and spread in leaping red and yellow. A cloud of smoke rose.

Then the main pyre burst alight and a tongue of flame licked up the girl's body to her hair. A sudden red-gold fountain flared out and the pillar, the writhing figure, and the gasping face were lost. She screamed once. The flames met in majesty above her head.

Sebastian tore his arms from their bonds and leapt into the heart of the fire. The flames played about him, but he did not burn . . . He wrenched a burning branch from the pile and hurled it towards the judges. But it flew high above their heads and, dropping a trail of sparks, sped harmlessly over the wall of the abbey. The force of his throw took him out of the circle of the fire, and a guard sprang in and slashed at him, opening his body from shoulder to waist.

His blood jetted and seared on the hot stones. He staggered back into the blaze and clasped the charred body of Elena. As he touched her the flames engulfed him.

——Paolo stood as Sebastian, his hands flickering above his head like pink flames, stretching to his small grotesque height. At the last words he collapsed into the chair. He was sweating profusely. This time we were really earning our money——

But the flames were not satisfied with the bodies of the lovers. The fiery branch Sebastian had thrown over the wall landed on a stone tray thinly strewn with the first layers of jasmine. The oil-soaked felt ignited and a bright blue flame danced along the length of the tray. It licked down onto a trail of spilt oil between the tray and the cloisters, flickering along it to the massive press.

Four hundred years of crushing the perfumed felt had saturated the woodwork with oil. The flames towered over the press and leapt forward along the channels and pipes which led down to the distilling-cellars. The porcelain tanks of spirit were housed beneath the bell tower which, open to the sky, served as a gigantic funnel to fan and suck the mounting blaze.

The whole population of the monastery was gathered in the square. No one knew that the abbey was on fire until a vast concussion shook the building as the first of the tanks exploded; orange light flashed out from the windows of the tower, throwing showers of glowing sparks to spread the fire to the roofs below.

Within two hours of the death of Elena the whole edifice was ablaze. There was nothing that could be done—at least, nothing that man could do.

Therefore, at the end of a long night of vain endeavour, the Abbot summoned the monks to prayer. At dawn they knelt in white ranks before the abbey and prayed for a storm of rain to quench the fire.

The sun shone from a cloudless sky. A few stones fell from the tower. The two hundred feet of stone and flame swayed like a poplar in the wind, and fell forward onto the mass of kneeling men below. All were killed; and the bells rang their death-knell in a last discordant carillon as they fell.

There was a little silence. I clapped softly. Gaeleto glowered at me. The American spoke.

" I seen a place burn like that once in Tucson. Molasses factory it was. Once a place like that gets started, there ain't nothing to do but let it burn out. I had an interest in the factory and I lost—"

Helen broke in, mimicking him harshly: " —And you lost nigh on eighty-four thousand dollars. *I* know. You've told me seventeen times already. Let the old man get on with *his* story."

If I'd been the American, I'd have seen she earned her next mink the hard way.

The hunchback sipped his coffee before continuing——

By evening the fire was dying. As the people of Cervacastro came cautiously through the gates they saw that the enfleurage trays farthest from the abbey were alive with bright blue flames. A peasant collected a barrowload of ash from about the stake and sprinkled a spadeful on each of the trays. The blue flames flickered and died away.

That night it rained heavily—almost an inch of water collected in the trays—and by morning the abbey was a blackened, smoking shell.

A man noticed that a strange rough fragrance was rising from the trays on which the ashes from the stake had been strewn. The grey powder was suspended in the water and a shining filigree of oil floated on the surface.

The man was a dealer in perfumes—his name was Bruno Gaeleto—and, in curiosity, he had the liquid drained from the trays and taken to his stills. There he drew off the essential oil by evaporation, refined and diluted it, and found that, without blending or flowering, he had captured a new elemental perfume.

He could not fix the character of the perfume, it shifted and muted as he inhaled it. But always, as its first drift came up, he

thought of a woman decked with flowers . . . and then would come the tang of fire . . . and so he called it *Elena delle Fiamme.*

He sold the thirty bottles he made for rich sums in Rome and Genoa, and his patrons demanded more. But, for many years, he could not reproduce it. He took mimosa and violet, wood-ash and water, and followed as well as he could the process that had brought the perfume to the world. But he could not recapture the vital combination of fire and fragrance.

Secretly, at great risk, he bought corpses from the graveyard, and mixed their ashes with willow and cypress, olive and santal—but all to no avail. Until, one day, so the story goes, another woman of Cervacastro was proven a witch and burnt at the stake. Bruno contrived to collect the ashes from her pyre, and spread them across the flames in the same trays that had received the ashes of Sebastian and Elena. This time, when he distilled the oil, the true fire-bloom of *Elena delle Fiamme* enticed the air again, the subtlest blend of love and cruelty.

For he had found the secret. *Elena delle Fiamme* could only be made with the ashes of a woman who had been burnt alive . . . .

The beautiful American lady leaned forward and took up the bottle. She traced the shape of the flame with a nail of coral. " So that's what it is," she murmured. " A woman suffering . . . struggling in the fire. Another Helen among the flames."

Gaeleto watched her in quick triumph. She would buy.

He went on: " To this day they make the perfume in the way that Bruno Gaeleto made it in the sixteenth century. Its great price is due to its rarity—it is made only in small quantities at intervals of five years or so, because, though mimosa and violet bloom every year, the ashes of a woman burnt alive are not easy to come by in these times . . .

" It is true that in the year of the making a girl disappears in the mountains of Emilia—but then "—he shrugged—" girls disappear every year in every place in the world. If you go to Cervacastro in the year of the making, they will take you into the cellars of the ruined abbey and you will see the bright blue tongues licking across the stone trays. They will sprinkle on a soft grey powder and the flames will gutter and die. And they will answer all your questions and smile at you—until you ask them whence comes the grey ash. Then their eyes will freeze and they will take you quickly out of the cellars and shepherd you silently away . . ."

His voice died, and he stood up to signify that the story was done. They followed him out of the alcove and back to the counter. He held the elegant black bottle up to the window and the golden liquid glowed, suddenly scarlet as the heart of a fire.

" It must indeed be exquisite for the signora who caresses her body with the grace of this perfume to think that the death of a woman is imprisoned in the crystal drops; that another woman, perhaps such a one as she, young, comely, and white of skin, should have died in torment to bring such enchantment into the world . . ." He opened the bottle and handed it to the girl.

She held it in her cupped hands and bent her head. She shivered. " It's there. I can feel it . . . The flowers, the sun, the flames, the stones—and the agony. It is all blended, and yet each is separate and clear. It's frightening . . . but it's lovely. It's cruel . . . and ravishing." She smiled a hard little smile—sad, but satisfied. " How many bottles have you got? "

Paolo looked thoughtful. " I have only eight left. It is three years since the last making and there is very little left in the world. And it is truly expensive: two hundred dollars a bottle."

She looked up at the American. He squeezed her shoulder, pathetically eager to please. " It don't matter what it costs, Helen. Just as long as you want it, you can have it, honey."

She swayed back and, like Delilah, brushed her golden hair against his cheek. " Thanks, sweetheart," she breathed.

I packed the bottles and took the sixteen hundred dollars. Paolo bowed them out and the door closed behind them . . .

" *Elena delle Fiamme!* " I said. " One day we're going to catch one called Millicent. And then you'll be in a spot."

" You are without soul," said Paolo. " An English pig with its nose in the mud. Your women smell only of lavender water."

He peered under the counter. " We're pretty low on *delle Fiamme*. You'd better go down and make another batch."

I picked up the new jar of phenyl ethyl alcohol and opened the cellar door. I took the bottle of benzyl acetate solution and started down the steps. The flower oils, the cinnamon bark, and the other ingredients were down there on the glass shelves.

I mimicked the hunchback's romantic tones. " And it is now full three weeks since the last making . . . I'll be down here fermenting for five hundred years. I'll probably have to burn our last virgin for this lot . . ."

" Tea-drinker. English pig," muttered Gaeleto. " Pig with its nose in the mud."

★ ★ ★

A FOOL AND HIS BROLLY ARE SOON PARTED

One thing we have never been able to save for a rainy day is an umbrella.

HERBERT V. PROCHNOW

RUNAWAY

This was his last chance
—it had to work

BY ARTHUR MAYSE

ROY, up-coast on Andros Island, had given me the wrong idea. Instead of being pretty, Miss Norah Rooney of Mount Holyoak Orphanage was somewhat plainer than a stone fence. Nature had decked her honest Irish face with a job lot of freckles, and the puffiness around her eyes was no aid to beauty.

I was seeing her in a poor light, of course, having just punted the orphans' football through her office window. "I was walking up the drive," I explained to Miss Norah Rooney, "when one of your little thugs heaved me a pass. So what could I do but boot it?"

She looked young for her job, and the sparkle of glass crumbs in her black hair made her seem younger still. But her eyes, very blue, were not young.

"I apologize," I said. "I never did learn to keep my big feet out of children's games. I'll send someone round to repair it."

"Our handyman will do that," she said, and I marked up another error for Roy. His Miss Norah Rooney didn't have a smiling voice. "You might throw the boys their ball, Mr. Simmons."

I whistled to a grinning urchin and flipped the stitch-broken football down to him. Then I asked the dark girl, "How is it you know my name?"

For answer, she handed me a sheet from the in-basket on her shabby desk. It had been ripped from a school jotter. The blots were no more than par for Grade Five, and the letters were painstakingly formed. I could almost see Roy working on that letter, left elbow hitched up, tongue between his teeth, and fair forelock brushing the paper.

Dear Miss Norah Rooney,

I am doing like you said and mostly keeping out of fights. One boy ribbed me at school about being an orphan but won't again and we are friends now. I have another friend called Mr. Jig Simmons which is a nickname for George, he runs a 65 *foot boat fitted up like a real store with diesel engines.* Island Trader *is her name and he has let me steer her twice. He is kind of funny*

and ugly with orange hair and a dent in his forehead he got falling off a motor bike in a hill-climbing race when young. I wish he were my dad instead of Mr. Tarbell. I will end now as I have to play with Robby. By accident he has broke the wheels off all my model cars except one.

Yours truly,
Roy

There was a PS.: *I will try not to run away again.* Beneath it were O's and X's squiggled small, as if by a kid grown old enough to feel awkward about such sissy doings.

The description of me, if unflattering, was fair enough. I dropped Roy's letter into the basket. Across the desk, Miss Norah Rooney watched me, expressionless. I wondered why she'd been crying.

" The main reason I'm here," I said, " is to talk to you about that. Roy running away from the Tarbells, I mean."

" Do you have other reasons, Mr. Simmons? "

" They'll keep," I said. Miss Norah Rooney's voice didn't warm. Not quite knowing where to begin, I studied her where she sat straight-backed in her swivel chair.

If she'd been weeping over Roy, that tough kid wouldn't thank her. Life had given him more than his share of hard knocks, but when you looked into those brush-wolf eyes of his, cold and calmly watchful, you doubted if since his baby days the boy had dropped a tear.

It was his eyes that stopped me, I told Miss Norah Rooney, the afternoon I pulled in to the Government landing at Talisman Harbour and found him sitting on his up-ended suitcase with his back to the freight-shed wall. Bruce and Neil Kelsey, the cannery manager's twins, stared from a safe ten feet away. They'd been fishing for rock cod till brisker sport suggested itself; their lines lay in a tangle on the planking. Neil mopped a dripping nose with his sleeve. His brother wore the beginnings of a choice shiner under his right eye.

The fair-haired stranger sat, choirboy-prim in his grey short-trousered suit, unruffled and unmarked. He didn't move a muscle, but his eyes met mine as I crossed the dock.

Years ago, I'd known another boy with that level grey gaze. My chest tightened and I thought: My, my, did those Kelsey twins make a mistake about this one!

I'd been thinking out loud. Miss Norah Rooney broke in on me sharply. " Roy isn't a troublemaker." From her expression it was obvious she liked me less each minute. " If there was a fight, I'm sure Roy didn't start it."

" The Kelsey twins did," I said. " You know how it is. Here

was this strange dog in their yard, wearing short trousers and a tie as well. A city type. You've read *Tom Sawyer*, haven't you? "

I wanted her to like me. It was important that she should do so before I got to the real business of my visit. There I'd lied to her—actually, Roy's running away hadn't made me lose any sleep. I offered her a cigarette, which Miss Norah Rooney declined with a shake of her head. An ashtray sat by her elbow, but she didn't push it across.

As I'd said, I'm unable to keep out of children's games. I sized up the situation on Talisman dock and decided a diversion was in order. " Two new model cars this trip," I told the young Kelseys.

Up-coast British Columbia is largely roadless, but frontier children are like youngsters anywhere when it comes to model cars. I carry three lines, and each trip is a sell-out. Bruce and Neil were already scrambling down the ladder to my boat.

" Coming? " I asked the tough character on the fibre-board suitcase, not too sure he wouldn't just tell me to scram.

" Thanks," he said politely, " but I'm supposed to wait right here."

The poky old *Lady Alex*, which hasn't hit any port on schedule since her launching, must have dropped him at the top of her northward run.

" Mind if I ask what you're waiting for? "

" A boat from Andros Island," he told me.

That tagged him. He'd be the orphan I'd heard Joe and Donna Tarbell were taking on as a companion for their Robert.

My, my, I thought again.

I said to him, " Look, laddie, you'll have something of a wait. Steamer got in twelve hours early. Andros is my next call, so suppose I drop you there? "

His watchful eyes sifted me. He said, " I'd better stay till Mr. Tarbell comes for me like they told me to."

I judged him to be about nine, but with his light-boned build, he could be a year older.

Miss Norah Rooney sat as if listening for some other voice than mine. She said now in a quiet, listless way, " Roy was turned ten. He was small for his age."

Well, he thought it over for a minute, then decided it would be all right if he looked at the cars at least, and went down to my *Island Trader* with his suitcase in his hand. He kept that battered case with him every second. Strained relations ended when I set up the new models from my stock. The Kelseys had been saving their allowances since my last call; they bought an M.G. and a Jaguar each.

Bruce said kind of shyly to Roy, " How about you? Gonna buy one? "

" Not this time," Roy told him, with his fingers caressing the red M.G.

" If you're broke," Neil Kelsey said, " maybe Bruce and me could lend you . . . "

Roy shook his head. For the first time, I saw him smile. " It isn't that," he said. " I've got a dollar, but I have to make it last."

Miss Norah Rooney sighed, and stirred in her chair. She said softly, more to herself than to me, " He wanted the M.G. I wish he'd gone ahead and bought it."

" He got it," I said. " I'm in the habit of giving samples to potential customers. Promotes goodwill."

The dark girl glanced quickly at me, and away. It occurred to me she was perhaps a shade less plain than I had thought. I've nothing against good honest freckles, and a smile could do a lot for that face, if Miss Norah Rooney could be persuaded to dredge one out of her deep-freeze.

Talisman cannery has its own grocery store, but the stock is pretty limited and I can always count on some business there. It was late afternoon when I returned to the landing. Mrs. Kelsey had sent word by her hopefuls that Roy could spend the night at their house and welcome, but he was still sitting on his suitcase in the dusk with his chin on his fist. " Getting chilly," I told him. " Better head for Kelsey's place, son."

" No," he said, and climbed to his feet. " I'll go on to Andros Island with you, Mr. Simmons."

An hour or so after that, I gave Roy his first turn at my *Island Trader*'s wheel. We were running cross-channel towards Surge Pass, me alone in the wheelhouse and old Brick Sullivan, my crew, below with his engines, when Roy drifted in. He stood by my shoulder, not talking. Finally I got off the seat.

" Take her a spell, will you? " I asked him. " I could do with a break for a cigarette."

There in the fading light I saw him smile for the second time, a quick, pleased grin. He reached for the spokes as if he had a hunger in his fingers. His fair hair looked almost white and his profile stood sharply clear. The channel was still wide enough so we could give or take a point, but the boy held dead true, as if he were an old hand.

" Who taught you? " I asked him, and he said, not shifting his attention from the course, " Miss Norah Rooney read us about lining up on markers out of a book."

I let him take my *Island Trader* right into the gut. From there on north to The Pinnacles is too tricky for a boy, what with surges and sudden boils and a couple of tricky whirlpools. The spring tide was shoving through at nine knots when we ducked into the Cultus Cove back-eddy and dropped anchor.

" We'll stay here till slack water," I said to Roy. " Time for something to eat now, then you'd best get a few hours' sleep."

He'd decided to trust me by this time, I gathered, since he had left his precious suitcase on the bunk in my spare cabin.

Miss Norah Rooney said, " It was precious to him, Mr. Simmons. Everything Roy had in this world was in it." She lit a cigarette from a packet on her desk and drew hard on it, looking past me through the glassless window. " Two shirts," she said, " a new plaid one for school and a white one for Sundays. He was wearing his blue broadcloth shirt. A wine-red pullover. Underwear. Four pairs of socks, two of jeans—one pair patched. Running-shoes. His Boy Scout manual and his *Robinson Crusoe*. Three model cars—four, I suppose, with the one you gave him."

" No," I said. She spoke as if she'd packed that suitcase herself. Probably she had. " The M.G. was in Roy's pocket. His hand kept going to it all the time we ate." Although it was high summer, I found the orphanage office cold as a morgue. I said, " There was something else the boy had, Miss Norah Rooney, or believed he had."

" What was that? "

" You," I said. " Things were tough for him at the Tarbells. Why didn't you write to him? "

She let that go. But she wouldn't meet my look, and her teeth were working on her lower lip.

It was cold on the water that night. An hour after Roy turned in, I began to wonder if he shouldn't have an extra blanket. I opened the cabin door, softly, so as not to wake him. He wasn't asleep, though. I caught the dim shine of his eyes as I tucked the blanket round him. The little red sports car was in his fist.

He said to me quietly, " Do you think they'll like me, Mr. Simmons? "

" The Tarbells? " I said. " Of course they will. After all, they picked you, didn't they? You'll do fine with them, son." I made it come out hearty, but I've never yet managed to deceive a child. I don't suppose anyone can.

" Do you call in often? " Roy asked me.

" Every three weeks," I said. " I blow my hooter when we're rounding Andros south point. When you hear it, come a-running."

" You bet I will," Roy said.

I did something then I hadn't done for years. Bent over a boy and ruffled his hair with the heel of my hand, and tucked him in. Then I lumbered out of there.

Even that early, I had my doubts about how Roy's affairs would go. Some women love the up-coast. Others, like Donna Tarbell, hate it and keep on hating it. She and Joe were hanging by a pretty thin string. Her Robert was her only solace. What Robby wanted, he got. One time I brought him a bike on order, a fancy racer. Another time it was a plywood boat with a three-horsepower outboard motor. So when Robby wanted a playmate who wouldn't smack him the way the nasty boys at school did when he hacked their shins or punched their little sisters, Donna Tarbell ordered him an orphan from town . . .

Miss Norah Rooney ground out her cigarette with a single hard thrust. "That's not so!" It was a cry of pain. "Do you think for one instant, Mr. Simmons, that we or any other reputable agency would release a child to a private home if we weren't satisfied he'd be well treated? Our Superintendent spent several hours with Mrs. Tarbell. She was convinced Roy would be in good hands."

"Were you convinced?"

Her frown did not shift from a point just over my head. Outside, the orphans were going crazy. Someone must have scored a goal. I made a mental note to send them a new football, a regulation job.

"I'm not the Superintendent," Miss Norah Rooney said. "And I'll confess to a—a rather special feeling for Roy."

I wanted to hurt her. I said, "If the arrangement was so good, why do you think he hot-footed it out of there?"

"That," she said coldly, "is what you came here to tell me, isn't it?"

"Very well," I said, "I'll tell you. He had two reasons. One was the Tarbells. The other was you. The way he talked to me about you, I came here expecting to find someone fit to fly with the angels."

"I didn't write to Roy because his chances of settling down in a new place would be better if there was a clean break with the orphanage. I may have been wrong. I'll not deny that." Her fingers strayed to the ashtray, shredding her cigarette butt. "It was a shock to me, hearing he'd tried to run away."

"It shouldn't have been," I told her. "Roy had a special feeling for you, too."

During my next trip north, that was. I'd meant to call at Andros Island on my way back as usual, but Roy had been on

my mind a lot since I'd delivered him to the Tarbells. I remembered how he looked, standing on the float with his suitcase tight-gripped while Robby scowled at him and Joe Tarbell stared with the first signs of dismay on his stupid, beefy face.

"Lord, Donna," I heard him mutter, "was this the best you could manage?"

Roy heard him. He wasn't supposed to—I'll give Joe Tarbell that much credit—but he did. I saw his chin lift. The boy had lost his breakfast, tossing along the weather side of Andros in a cross-sea, and with his pinched, sharp-nosed little face, and his jacket front still wet and wrinkled where I'd sponged it, he wasn't altogether a sight for sore eyes. But I was proud of him, the way he took it.

"Hullo, Robby," he said calmly.

The pride of the Tarbells made a face at him. "Look, Ma," he squealed. "Lookit his funny old suitcase! Why don't he put it down?"

"Speak nicely to your new brother, dear," Donna Tarbell told him. But her smile was indulgent.

I'd been standing behind Roy. At ten, a boy is still much closer to babyhood than manhood. The slight neck and the jug ears gave him a delicate; an unprotected look.

Go on, you fools, I thought. Take him in, make a fuss over him, can't you?

But they didn't, and that was why I was fighting the tide through Surge Pass a week early. I had to know how he'd fared.

We cleared the pass against the last of the ebb. A mile north of there, I found Roy. He squatted alone in the sternsheets of the boat Robby wasn't allowed to take out of the home cove. The outboard was buzzing steadily, and even when I laid my *Island Trader* in towards him, he didn't throttle down.

"Where to?" I hailed him.

"Getting out," he called back.

"A pity," I told him. "I've a new one I thought you'd want to see. A Sunbeam-Talbot."

"The Alpine?" he asked, still holding the pram on course, and I hollered, "That's right. Slack off and come on board."

"I'd like to, Mr. Simmons." He looked up at me with the sun in his eyes and his light hair blowing. "I really would. But I've got a long way to go."

"O.K.," I told him. "Good luck, son." I sheared off.

Roy continued south towards the mouth of Surge Pass.

Miss Norah Rooney had stopped playing with her cigarette butt. Her hands—plain hands, square and capable—were pressed hard on the desk top.

She asked me, "How large was that boat, Mr. Simmons?"

"The pram? Oh," I said, "eight foot or thereabouts."

"And you let him go?"

"Yes. I was his friend. He trusted me. If I'd shanghaied him into my *Island Trader*, there'd have been an end to that. Anyhow, with the flood started, the tide was against him."

With most people I get along very well. It was strange to feel someone hating me the way Miss Norah Rooney did. As a matter of fact, Roy was in no danger. There was only a light chop, and without oars or spare fuel in the boat, he wouldn't get far. Even if he did make the entrance to Surge Pass, the outflooding current would stop him as completely as a locked gate.

I loafed around off Andros south point, keeping the boat in my glasses till it lay dead on the water. Then we went out to pick him up.

"Could you sell me some petrol?" Roy asked. He stood in the pitching boat, his hair rumpled, the outboard starter-cord in his fist. "I can pay, I've got most of my dollar left."

"We don't use petrol," I told him. "Look, it's not my business, but I'm curious. Why are you running away?"

"I'm not running away," he said. "I'm running *to* someone."

"To Miss Norah Rooney, eh?"

He nodded. I said, "You made a good try, son. Now, come and have a look at that Sunbeam-Talbot. She's a beauty."

Roy tossed me the painter and scrambled over the side. Below, in my store section, he held the model car lovingly, turning it this way and that. Then he set it back on the showcase.

"No use me buying it," he said. "He'd just smash it the way he did my others."

"Robby did that?"

"His mother said it was an accident. Maybe it was."

"Take the wheel," I told him. "I feel the need of a smoke. Steer for the buoy off Andros south."

Roy laid hold of the spokes. I stood by him, not talking, letting the good feel of a boat under way come through to him.

"He was working on the M.G. when I caught him," Roy said at last. "I tried to take it away from him, and he kicked me and I guess I sort of shoved him. He dropped on the floor, yelling."

"So you got punished," I said.

"No. Mrs. Tarbell doesn't believe in punishing kids."

I waited, watching the competent small hands on the wheel, seeing the large ears and the thin, defenceless neck. Roy said, "I heard them talking, after we'd gone to bed. Mr. Tarbell said to her she'd made a big mistake, and how could you expect anything different from a guttersnipe that had sneaked into life by the back-

door. When I heard that, I knew there was no point in sticking around, and I started wanting Miss Norah Rooney."

I ached to put my hand on his shoulder. To take him in my arms and tell him life has only the one door for all of us, and let him cry his heart out, then give him every model car in the case. But I felt that wasn't the way, not with Roy.

Miss Norah Rooney said to me bitterly, " He wasn't a man. He was only a little boy, and badly hurt. No doubt you inflicted a man-to-man talk on him? "

" I treated him like a man, yes," I answered her.

I said to him, " I'll make you a deal. You're ten now. When you're sixteen, earlier if you shape well, I'll sign you on as my deckhand for the summer. When you're through college you can come in with me full-time, if you've no better offers."

" You mean that, Mr. Simmons? " He turned his head, and I ordered him, " Get on course before we're into the kelp. Of course I mean it. But there's one condition."

" I'm to go back to them," he said.

" That's it. You'll take what they hand out to you. D'you think I want anyone for my partner who can't stand a few socks on the jaw? And another thing, from now on, call me Jig."

Roy thought it over for a careful moment. Then he said, " It's a deal." And as the south-point buoy slid past to port, he told me quietly, " I wish you were my dad, Jig."

" If I were," I said, " right now we'd go be Robinson Crusoes for a week. Land on Mittlemass Island off yonder, live on seafood, get away from our troubles, have a whale of a time."

And while I talked to him about Mittlemass, I was making up my mind to have a man-to-man session with Joe Tarbell. Maybe the decision was a mistake.

Miss Norah Rooney said, " It most certainly was."

She reached into her basket for another letter. This one smelt faintly of verbena, and the sloping handwriting was a woman's. I didn't mind too much what Donna Tarbell had written about my continual interference in their family affairs, but I did resent being called an itinerant pedlar when I could buy Joe Tarbell out twice over. And I hadn't beaten Joe savagely. He swung on me and I guess I sort of shoved him, and he fell on the float and started yelling.

" I shouldn't have touched him," I said. " But I was mad—mad right through."

Miss Norah Rooney rose up from her chair. Her freckles stood out dark against a chalky face, and her blue eyes cut at me like a welder's flame.

" No doubt you meant well, Mr. Simmons. But I think it's

time you heard a few truths. We put Roy on probation with the Tarbells because we felt it might be his last chance to find a home and family. He's long past the age of easy adoption. People want babies, nice little girl babies, not half-grown boys with their characters and identities already established."

Her chin wobbled dangerously, but her angry eyes stayed dry. "It seemed a wonderful chance for Roy. His natural mother refused to release him for adoption till he was past three. Even three years old is late. He's been in four foster-homes since then —four homes, Mr. Simmons, his world turned upside-down, and his security destroyed four separate times. This was the last, and it had to work!"

"So I queered it," I said. "Well, I won't argue that with you. But as I see it, the fact he's had four so-called homes is no reflection on Roy. It simply shows me the kind of creatures your outfit turned him over to. That's another reason I'm here. The real one, Miss Norah Rooney."

I got up, too, giving her stare for stare. My hair is somewhat brighter than orange, and my temper matches. "I want that boy. I mean to have him for my son. I'll fight you people, the Tarbells, the whole world to get him."

"*You?*" Her mouth twitched. "An—an itinerant pedlar? A bachelor? We don't assign children to single men."

"I wasn't always single," I told her. "It happens I'm a widower. I lost my wife, my son, and my first trading-vessel in a fire three years ago. I can't give Roy a mother. But everything else my boy had or would have had is his. And if you'll pardon me spilling a little sentiment, the love of my heart goes with it!"

Miss Norah Rooney began to cry then, as if a dam had burst. The tears slid down her face, but still her taut voice didn't waver. She reached out once more to her in-basket.

"You're too late, Mr. Simmons," she whispered. "Three days too late . . ."

The telegram she pushed at me was datelined Talisman Harbour and signed by Joe Tarbell. It had been filed less than two hours earlier. For a moment the words didn't register. Then they jabbed like daggers.

ROY MISSING SINCE TUESDAY STOP BELIEVED DROWNED SURGE PASS STOP SEARCH CONTINUES STOP

"He's dead," Miss Norah Rooney told me, and her voice did shatter then. "He was my best and my bravest, and he's dead." She crumpled into her chair. The fingers that hid her freckled face were wet. "We made a deal," I said stupidly. "I never thought he'd go off again."

"It was my fault." Her words came to me shaken and muffled. "I did write him, Mr. Simmons. I told him he was all wrong about you, that he must have nothing more to do with you. He trusted me too, you see."

I reached for her telephone. I dialled Island Airlines and got Bill Blackburn. "A seaplane, Bill," I told him. "It's an emergency. You to fly it, if you're free."

"When?" Bill asked me. "How many going, Jig?"

"In half an hour," I said. "No—twenty minutes." I glanced down at Miss Norah Rooney's shaking shoulders and bowed black head. "Better count on two passengers."

We touched down at Talisman Harbour an hour after sunset. Bill Blackburn at once started to refuel his Beaver.

"I've a dozen fishing-boats combing the channel," big Jim Kelsey told me, "and the R.C.A.F. has an Air-Sea-Rescue team on the job." He shook his shaggy head, a kind man with open distress on his face. "They spotted what may be a body close to The Pinnacles. I'll go in myself, next slack water."

"It doesn't have to be Roy," I said loudly for Miss Norah Rooney's benefit; she was shivering beside me on the dock in her light cloth coat.

"Could be driftwood, Jim, or a dead seal."

Bill Blackburn signalled to us then, and we started for the seaplane where it sat fuelled and ready.

"It's hopeless, Mr. Simmons," the dark girl said dully. "Altogether hopeless. There's so much sea, so many islands."

"One island," I told her. "One little bit of an island off by itself in the middle of Orca Sound. The Robinson Crusoe island I told Roy about that day. Shellfish on the beaches, I told him. Codfish in the kelp beds and drift for a fire. I'm pinning my faith on Mittlemass Island."

"But they'd surely have seen him," she said.

"Not if he didn't want to be seen," I said. "He's a mighty smart kid, remember."

We circled Mittlemass at six hundred feet, our first pass. Then Bill Blackburn climbed down and dragged that horseshoe of grey rock and dark timber, with his slipstream bending the evergreen tassels. No fire showed. The inner beach was empty. Bill swung round to us, mouth and thumb turned down.

"Land her," I begged. "It's the only way we can be sure." Bill hunched his shoulders, and slid the Beaver down and in.

I carried Miss Norah Rooney through knee-deep water to shore. In the early dusk, on the lone beach, we faced the driftwood tangles and the woods above us.

"Roy!" I shouted. "Hey . . . Roy!"

An echo gave us back his name. The thing the Air-Sea-Rescue team had spotted might be a body and the body his, wedged by the wicked ebb-tide in a niche of The Pinnacles.

" If he's here," I said, fighting that thought, " his boat must be, too. He couldn't haul it far."

Stumbling through sand and shingle, we plodded up the beach. I saw the boat half hidden in piled drift, and Roy shadowing out of the woods. " Hi, Jig," he called, " got any new ones? "

I could have beaten his ears off for the scare he'd given us. But as Miss Norah Rooney had pointed out in her office two hours back and two hundred miles south, he was only a little boy. My boy. " The newest," I told him, around the knot in my throat. " A beauty. A brand new sports model."

Roy saw who was with me then, and came running. Miss Norah Rooney knelt and kissed him. I saw his arms go tight around her neck.

In this late light you could scarcely make out her freckles. She didn't seem plain at all. In fact, it puzzled me, looking down at her, how such a lovely girl had gone this long unclaimed.

" Suppose I were married," I said to her. " Would that make the difference? I mean, would your outfit take a chance on me?"

"That would depend," Norah Rooney murmured, still kneeling, still hugging Roy. " We'd have to interview your wife, of course, and—and—well . . . "

I said, " She'd pass. I'm sure of it."

" You could put her on probation, sort of," Roy chipped in, and I said, " That sounds like a fine idea. What do you think, Norah? " She was blushing. I couldn't see, but I knew it.

" A fine idea, Jig," she answered. I reached for her hand and kept it while we trudged down towards the seaplane. Roy walked ahead of us. To the bush pilot grinning from his cockpit, we must have looked like a close and happy family.

★ ★ ★

DRESSING DOWN

Josephine [Baker] seemed to take a delight in cutting things as fine as she possibly could . . . How many times did the conductor stand, baton poised, at the second when she should have made her entrance, while on stage the girls threw panic-stricken glances into the wings and the stage manager yelled up the stairs: " What the hell is she doing? "

" Dressing."

" What do you mean—dressing! She doesn't wear a stitch in this scene! "

PAUL DERVAL, *The Folies Bergère*

LITTLE TIN GOD

He had a way of getting whatever he wanted

BY JAY WILLIAMS

YES, that shiny tin on the shelf is the only souvenir I have left of what might have been a great industry. It ended the night I beat Gerard at roop. I'm not sorry, though; not exactly.

We were partners, uneven partners: Gerard had put up two-thirds of the money and I had put up the other third. Besides, I could speak a number of Venusian dialects, and I had been a collecting zoologist.

Gerard knew the canning end.

I don't know whether you remember or not, but some years ago there was a fad for what was called bush-squirrel. It didn't last long, but while it did everyone ate bush-squirrel. It was—what do the kids say nowadays?—the *oofiest*; it was a wonderful delicacy, melting and tender, an indescribable flavour, better than partridge, better than Strasbourg goose-liver, satisfying but not filling. Every gourmet on two planets wanted it, and a lot of people who weren't gourmets. Well, that was us, that was our industry.

You couldn't freeze the beasts. Something about the fat; it became rancid when it was thawed. The only way to preserve them was by canning them immediately. The new Doe-Mueller process made that fairly easy, of course, and the source of power and heat for cooking, sterilization, and sealing the tins was a ten-by-six Farnsby unit, so we decided that our best bet would be to set up the works right in the bush; collect, can, store, and then ship once a month.

The new macalloy Number Ten tins weighed almost nothing, and all in all it worked out cheaper than if we had had to rent space in Centre City, or maintain freezers.

Then, this one evening, after about six months of fairly profitable operation, I won Gerard's jacket at barter-roop. In case you don't know it, it's just the regular game of roop, only instead of playing for counters you play for belongings.

I didn't much like playing with Gerard, he was an offensive

winner and a poor loser, but there wasn't much else he wanted to do. Three or four evenings a week he'd pester me: "Come on, how about a couple of hands of roop?" And when Gerard pestered you it was like being nudged by an elephant.

He was a big, tall, red-faced man, red-haired, freckled, with a wide smile that had something professional about it, one of those genial men who was always slapping you on the back, always saying things like, "I'm thankful for small mercies—and you're small enough," or, "Could be worse, but not much worse."

He had started life as a gospel shouter, I was told, and after a particularly successful season had gone into commercial three-vee. Then he went into the preserved-fruit business, and from that got into dehydrated foods and cereals, and there had been a scrap with the government over adulterated goods, and after a while he had taken his stake and gone to Venus.

"There are always specialities in a new place that somebody wants, if you can just make them see that they want them," he said. "People overlook the obvious. It's like centuries ago when the West was opened; everybody thought of gold, but the real wealth was right there in the sage-brush—it became cattle-grazing land. Today, everybody thinks of Venus as a rare-earth mine, but there are plenty of other things that can be gathered up with a lot less effort."

He was right, too, as a lot of crooks are right, or he would have been, I guess, if it had worked out.

Anyway, night after night we'd sit around and drink gin and play roop, and listen to the singing of the hairy lizards, and the thousand different noises of the night. Usually, he won. But on this particular night I hit a streak of luck. I took the third pot, which had pushed up into a big one, and I got six handkerchiefs, a pair of socks, a bandolier of Jag-gum, and a pocket water-tester.

We started the next pot, and the bidding went up and up, and I felt lucky. I drew two hearts to a supreme of diamonds, and I bid my silk shirt which I knew Gerard coveted. It was real synthetic silk, not this imitation stuff that wears out in no time. He was sweating, and he kept eyeing me as if he could see through my cards, and finally he put up his Troutman jacket.

I don't know if he had really gone to Troutman College but he sure liked that jacket. It was what they call milk-suede, either because it was made from a casein derivative, or because it was as soft as milk: it was buttercup yellow, with the little red T over the pocket, and it was warm and light and comfortable.

He said, "What've you got that'll match that?" I said I didn't know. He said, "Will you put up Betsy's picture?"

I didn't know whether he was needling me or was serious. He said, " I mean it," and I could see then that he wasn't kidding. That was the first I knew that he wanted her too. I got mad. I said, " That's a hell of a thing to ask," and he said, " Afraid you'll lose it? "

" No," I said. " I'll put it up."

" That's fine," he said, " just fine. It'll be practice for you."

I said, " What do you mean? " and he said, " For when I take her away from you."

He put down his hand. He had three hearts to a run of clubs. I put down my two hearts and he reached out for the pot, and then I slapped down my supreme of diamonds.

He tried to cover up with a laugh, but it was hollow. He ripped off the jacket and threw it on the table, among the cards. He said, " I'll get it tomorrow night."

" There isn't going to be any tomorrow night," I said.

" Oh? "

" That's right. I'm sick and tired of this game."

" One of those hoggish winners, eh? "

" If that's what you want to call it."

" We'll see."

" All right," I said. I got up and put on the jacket.

" It's too big for you," Gerard said mockingly.

I went outside and slammed the door.

I was boiling with suppressed anger. Winning from Gerard was no pleasure, if you know what I mean, he made it look as though he had let you win and knew very well that he'd get his own back. He wouldn't let me get away with it, I knew that. No matter what I said, we'd play again, maybe next week or the week after, and sooner or later he'd win.

It wasn't only that. He was overbearing and cruel, and I'd had enough of him. I think he really got a certain kick out of something like butchering the squirrels for canning. And he had a way of getting whatever he wanted, so that I knew if he put his mind to it, and wasn't just tormenting me because he was bored, he would really take Betsy away from me.

I took a deep breath of the heavy, scented air. Then I became aware of the fact that the singing of the lizards had stopped. The night, in fact, was silent. That was odd. But it wasn't as odd as what followed.

A small, chirping voice said in the Paa-raka dialect, " The light, the light! Great is the light."

My skin froze.

There was a chorus of cheepings and chitterings, like laughter,

or like a roomful of mice. The same voice said, " We greet you."

My teeth began chattering. There was something absolutely terrifying in that tiny voice coming out of the silent darkness. I fumbled at my belt for my lamp, and with a sweating hand I unclipped it and flashed it on.

At first, I saw nothing in the dazzle. Then I became aware of innumerable round, glittering yellow balls that seemed to festoon the trees and creepers like fairy lanterns. As I became accustomed to the light, I saw that they were the eyes and faces of bush-squirrels.

You know, they aren't really squirrels. They're about that size and have bushy short tails, but there the resemblance ends. Nobody who ever saw one would have wanted to eat it; of course, by the time we got through with them, they were just tinned meat. They had large eyes like lemurs, and a kind of folded, leafy structure below that was both nose and mouth. They had rather naked skins, varying in colour so that it was difficult to describe the species: some were creamy white, some blue, some red-and-blue, some spotted, but otherwise they looked pretty much alike.

They had leathery wings and spent most of their time in the trees; nevertheless, they were easy enough to catch. The day blinded them, I always thought, so that they flew right into our nets. They had disproportionately long teeth and could have given nasty bites, but they always seemed very docile and gentle when we took them.

I realized slowly that it was one of them that was talking to me. For a moment I thought I had gone mad.

The voice, which I saw came from one of the white ones, said slowly, " What is wrong? Are you ill? "

I found myself saying, in a kind of idiot baby-talk, " I am all right. I am surprised. That's all."

" Surprised? Why? " said the squirrel.

" Well," I said, giggling, " it's strange to hear animals talking."

" Animals? I don't understand," said the squirrel. " We are the Sjetjik."

" Good for you," I said. I think then I must have blacked out for a minute. When I came to, I was sitting on the ground and all about me in the light of the lamp were squirrels—or Sjetjiks—hundreds and hundreds of them, and more eyes shining beyond.

The leader—or at any rate, the white one—must have been talking while I was out. " . . . Far and far away," he was saying, " to learn your speech so that we could speak to you. And now I say, *Welcome*, and, *Good air to you.*"

The Paa-raka dialect was not meant for complicated ideas. By " good air ". I suppose he meant something like " good night " or " happy flying." I shook my head.

" Good air to *you*," I said. Then I took hold of myself. I saw that it was simply a matter of making an adjustment, like knowing that a specimen is a mammal and then discovering that it is oviparous as well. The thing was that because they *looked* like small animals we had always taken it for granted they were nothing but small animals. On the other hand, simply because they could speak, or one of them could speak, it didn't mean they were rational creatures, any more than because a gorilla can use simple tools it means he is a man.

The white one flipped his wings and flew down to land beside me. " Now that I can speak your speech," he said, " we can perform the rites."

This did not seem to make much sense. I said slowly, trying to sort out my ideas, " It is not my speech, although I can speak it."

" Ah," he said, " just as I can speak it, although the Sjetjik speak to each other without these words. But we could never make you understand us. That is why I had to go to listen to the Paa-raka."

I thought suddenly that it was quite a feat for this creature to learn a new language in the six months we had been there.

" Tell me who you are," I said.

Although his twittering voice held no human emotion, there was a kind of puzzlement in his tone as he answered, " Who we are? We are the Sjetjik. Or in this speech, one would say the Living Ones."

There was no word for " people " or " men " in the Paa-raka tongue.

" And who am I? " I said.

" You are God," he replied calmly.

I could think of nothing to say but, " Oh." Then, when I had recovered a bit, I said, " How do you know I am? "

He replied promptly. " Because you wear gold." And with one of his front limbs, which looked like nothing so much as a bunch of fish-hooks, he carefully touched Gerard's jacket that I was wearing.

I thought it over. " Do you mean," I asked, " that you can tell by colour? "

" How else? " He turned his head and began chirping to the others. Three or four of them came forward well into the light. He motioned to them. " All Living Ones are known by their colours," he said. " The red is the gatherer of songs, the blue

is the fruit-picker, the red-and-blue is the shelter-builder. I," he added, with what might have been pride, " am the teller of all that happens."

A historian, I thought to myself; or a newspaperman? I felt positively light-headed. " And gold," he went on, " is the sacred colour, the colour of God. So we knew you. Did you not know this? "

" No," I said foolishly. " Among us it is not so."

There was a pause. Then I thought of something. " You mean Gerard," I said. " It is his yellow jacket."

" Jacket? " the white one said. " Gerard? "

" The other one of us."

" Ah; the white one."

It occurred to me, then, that he could not tell us apart, for it was I who usually wore a white bush-coat. And certainly, when you come to think of it, how should he? For, apart from his colour, I could not see any essential difference between him and all the hundreds of others of his kind.

" He is the one who speaks for God, no doubt," the white one said complacently. " Now, oh Light, oh great Golden Sky, tell us if we may perform the rites of kingship with you as we always have among ourselves? "

I went back into the central hut, where Gerard was laying out a game of solitaire and still drinking gin, which had no appreciable effect on him. I leaned back against the door; everything looked so normal and familiar that for a moment I wondered if I had imagined the whole thing.

" Well, what's the matter with you? " Gerard said. " Want to give me a chance to get even, after all? "

" Listen, Gerard," I said, " this is serious. I have just been talking to a bush-squirrel."

He leaned back in his chair as I had known he would, and put his chin on his freckled hands. Before he could say anything, I went on quickly, " It's real. Listen to me, for heaven's sake. I'm not crazy, and I'm not drunk, and I'm not kidding. *They can talk.*"

He looked at me for a long time. Then he said, " All right. They can talk."

" They can talk. One of them, a kind of expert, went off to the nearest Paa-raka settlement and learnt the language so they could talk to us."

" That's more than I could ever do, with those triple consonants," Gerard said jocularly. Then he looked at me again. " You're really serious about this, aren't you? "

"They think we're some kind of god," I blurted out.

"You mean they can really talk? Not just parrot words?"

"That's it. They're rational, intelligent creatures."

He chewed his lip for a moment. "If they're so intelligent, how come they let us catch them for the pot?"

"That's just it. They think we're gods and that we are sending them to a better land. They see the light behind the clouds, during the day, and they have a belief that up there is a bright land where it is always day. That's why it's been so easy to catch them; that's why none of us has ever been bitten by them."

"I see." He thought about it for a while. Then he said, "Well, what about it?"

"What about—? Why, they're *people*, Gerard. Don't you see?" I almost shouted.

"Calm down," he said. "Don't get so worked up. As far as I can see, it just makes our job that much easier. Doesn't it? So they talk. Could we make a better profit by exhibiting them to a roomful of scientists somewhere? Or do you think there's still a future in hitting the carnival circuit with talking animals? We're better off with this business. Our first six months have paid off our initial investment and given us a profit already. The demand is growing; we're going to start booming soon. Bush-squirrel for Christmas instead of turkey or goose. Eh? And if they want to jump into our Doe-Muellers and save us the trouble of netting them, why's that so bad?"

I stared at him. "Gerard," I said, trying to keep my voice level, "these are reasoning creatures."

"Have they got souls?"

"They believe in God."

"In me, you mean," he cried. "Don't make me laugh, Oren. It says right in the Bible, *God created man in his own image.* He didn't create him in the image of a bush-squirrel. Use your head. What makes them human? Do they look human? Do they get married, or go to church? Do they crack jokes, or drink gin?"

"But they're intelligent," I said.

He pushed away the table and got up. He was grinning, but it was an uncheerful thing to see. "You're a sentimentalist, Oren," he said. "A bloody sentimentalist. How do you know they're intelligent?"

"Listen," I said desperately. "There are millions of people on Earth and on Venus, too, who don't get married the way we do, or go to church, or drink gin, or even look like us or tell jokes like ours. Lord knows what kind of jokes the Sjetjik tell,

or whether they ever laugh. But they are just as human inside themselves as we are.

"They have enough brains to learn a new language quickly. They have enough sense of poetry to connect the colour yellow with the sunlight beyond the clouds of Venus. They have enough intelligence to make myths in which their god-king is golden like the light—that's why they think we're gods, because of this yellow jacket of yours. And they're waiting outside now, no different from any other worshippers, to worship us."

"They are, eh?" His red face became very hard. "And what do you want to do?"

"We've got to tell them," I said earnestly, "that we're just men. We've got to pack up and go, and leave them alone. Could you ever—eat one of them again, put one through the Doe-Muellers, knowing that it was a rational being?"

"Sure," he said. He had come closer to me, and all at once his pistol was in his hand, the muzzle only a couple of inches from my stomach. He looked at me coldly and impersonally, and I realized that this man would have put me through the choppers if he could have made a buck out of it—yes, and eaten me, too, without a qualm.

"You're a sentimental fool, Oren," he said. "That's why you won't get far. You don't deserve a girl like Betsy. You don't deserve even your one-third of the profits. But I'm an easy-going guy. I'm not going to kill you. I'll tell you what I am going to do, though. Give me that jacket."

I took it off.

"Now turn round." When I turned, he slipped the jacket on and held the gun against my back.

"All right," he said. "Let's go outside."

"What for?" I asked.

"I can understand that Paa-raka talk, but I can't speak it. You'll go out with me and tell them what the deity says—" He chuckled—"He says he is very pleased with them, and they are to get on with their worship, and tomorrow—Are there lots of them, by the way?"

"There are thousands," I said sullenly.

"Good. Tomorrow, the first five hundred can report to my altar. The Doe-Muellers. That's about capacity, I should say. Get going."

So we went outside.

By now, the Sjetjik are accepted as one of the aboriginal tribes of Venus, less human-looking, of course, than the Paa-raka, but not as curious by any means as the recently discovered Hlouma

in the northern islands. They do learn fast—just as quickly as they learnt to operate our Doe-Muellers—but they keep their ancient rites, including that of tearing their god-king to pieces every half-year and sending him to his Happy Land of Light above the clouds.

And that's why I keep the tin. I'm not sure it's Gerard but, just as he said, I'm a sentimentalist.

★ ★ ★

OFF THE RAILS

My father played a brigand chief who had a faithful steed rejoicing in the friendly if unromantic name of Teddy. In the course of the play, he had to dismount and say to his steed, " Get thee to the Mountains "—and the steed would canter off, being trained to the business. But alas, during the run the original Teddy, a real old-timer, died and a new horse was introduced, at short notice, from the stables of an omnibus company nearby. So, of course, when my father gave it the cue, it took not the slightest notice. In vain a hopeful and resourceful " property man " flourished a carrot to attract it. The horse just went on standing. Then my father had an idea. He thought of the signal by which bus conductors restarted their bus when out of reach of the bell. He stamped hard three times upon the stage and said, " Right behind." The horse recognized that cue all right and trotted off—to general applause . . .

ELLALINE TERRISS, *Just a Little Piece of String*

AT PENCIL POINT

You should, of course, make it a point of honour not to turn to page 110 until you have the total 12 points. So grab your pencil, and dash off the answers.

1. *What had Anthony Trollope to do with pillar-boxes?*
2. *" The army all saluted, As they marched along the road. Was it the King? Or Kitchener ? "*
   Certainly not! It was someone very much more important.
3. *At the end of Hamlet four corpses are on stage. Who are they ?*
4. *" The unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable." What English wit describing what English sport?*
5. *Where did the Harmonious Blacksmith live? Who set him to music?*
6. *What is the maximum range of a human voice? Of a ship's siren?*

Mother knows best

He that would the daughter win
Must with the mother first begin

JOHN RAY

Here's a sailor home from the Guineas,
His face is as black as a leaf,
His eyes are like forests of darkness,
His heart is a hot-bed of grief.
His arms are like roots of the jungle,
He has ladies tattooed on his skin,
And his clothes smell of cinnamon-cardamon-tar.
Oh mother, may I let him in?

H. H. BASHFORD, *The Stranger*

Decent Easy Men

" Now there were four men in America you might have married, and their names were— "

" I could only have married one," Lavinia objected.

" Their names were," Mrs. Johnstone pursued, " Stephen Seleucis, Theodore Drakenburg, Michael B. Sprott, and Walt Watt. They were not good enough for you." Mrs. Johnstone paused to let this sink in. " What did they do? They married someone else."

" Three other people in all," Lavinia amended.

" But Stephen didn't," said Mrs. Johnstone, as though virtue disclaimed the abbreviation that affection craved. " And next week, I hope you will give him a different answer."

Lavinia looked upwards at the Bridge of Sighs. " I should be very inconsistent if I did," she said at last.

" Who wants you to be consistent? " asked Mrs. Johnstone. " When you are married you can be as consistent as you like. But not when you are turned twenty-seven and unmarried, and

have a grey hair or two, and the reputation of being as forbidding to decent men as the inside of Sing-Sing prison. I could say more, but I will refrain, because you are my daughter and I don't want to hurt your feelings."

A confession of belated solicitude always rounded off Mrs. Johnstone's harangues on this topic; it had become a formula.— "Decent men," Lavinia echoed, watching the throng of loungers on the piazzetta. "You don't think it's their decency that makes me dislike them?" She spoke without irony, reflectively.

"Well, I don't know what else you have to find fault with," remarked Mrs. Johnstone, "except their looks. She isn't a beauty; but you can't have everything."

L. P. HARTLEY, *Simonetta Perkins*

Cool Excuse

Tell me daughter, my daughter so fair,
Why did you tarry by the fountain there?
(*Love, oh love alas!*)

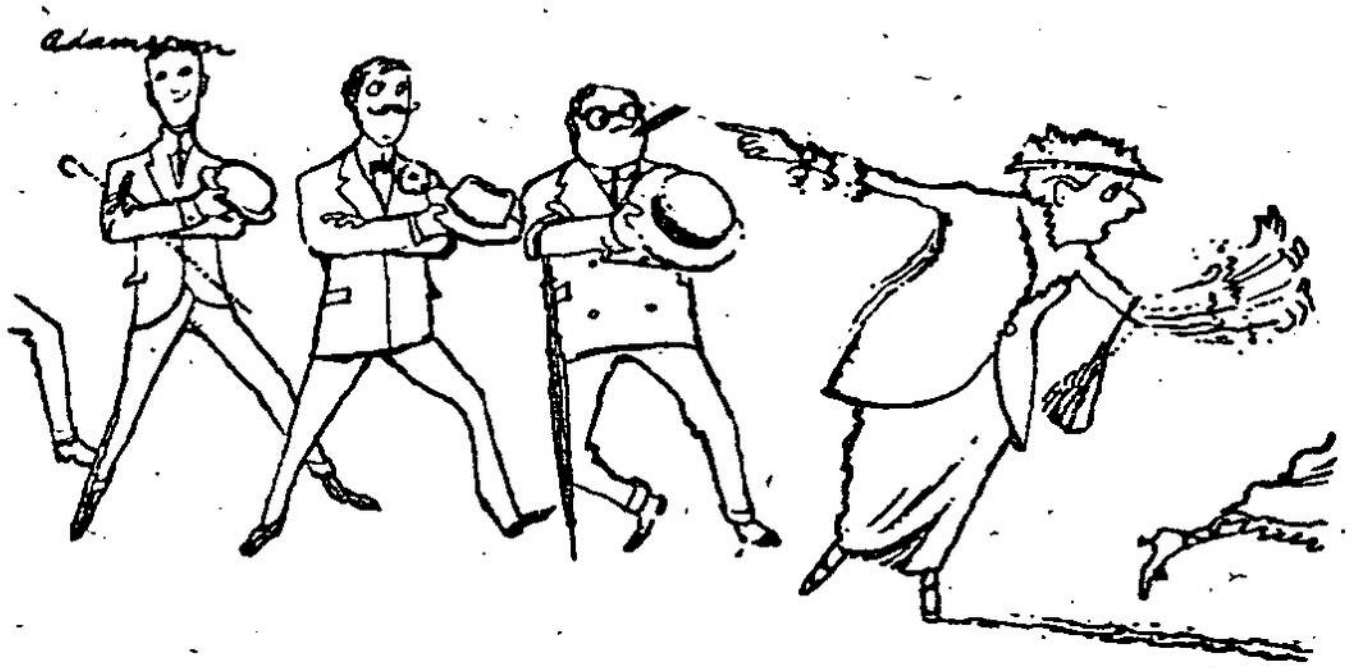
Tell me daughter, my lovely child say
Why did you tarry at the fountain today?
(*Love, oh love alas!*)

Mother, I lingered by the fountain so cool,
While deer from the mountain were stirring the pool.
(*Love, oh love alas!*)

You lie, my daughter, you lie for your lover's sake,
For I've never seen mountain deer stirring the lake.
(*Love, oh love alas!*)

You lie, my daughter, for your love it would seem
For I've never seen mountain deer stirring the stream.

GILBERT PHELPS



Keeping Mum

He called me by my name
As the bride of another—
The world may think me gay
For my feelings I smother—
Oh! Thou hast been the cause of this anguish, my mother!

THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY

Lay That Pistol Down!

"The truth," said Stroganoff solemnly. "It is you will understand *la scandale*, so you must not repeat. You will be discreet—no?" And with many gestures he launched into the story. "Until last year," he began, "the little Rubinska she dance the Swan Queen *comme une petite vierge*. No good . . . My child, I tell her, *mais gentilment*, you must take for yourself a lover. But always she refuse. These English girls they are so respectable. And then suddenly I notice she dance right. So I enquire. And to my disgust it is Anton. Alas, I say, that is bad. *Une mauvaise affaire*. Anton will tire soon and—poof—off he go."

So, Stroganoff went on, he had gone to warn her mother. Quill gathered that it had been a difficult interview. Stroganoff in his innocence had assumed that the mother knew all about the affair and unaware of Palook's true character, probably approved. It had taken a long time to convince the mother that her daughter was no longer a virgin, and then she muddled the issue by insisting upon marriage. Stroganoff had not been able to move her from that view. If the villain would not marry her daughter, she said, she would strangle him with her own hands.

"But she shoot him instead," said Stroganoff happily and leant back in his chair with an air of triumph.

CARYL BRAHMS and S. J. SIMON,
A Bullet in the Ballet

Fête Worse Than Death?

Why don't the men propose, mamma?
Why don't the men propose?
Each seems just coming to the point,
And then away he goes;
It is no fault of yours, mamma,
That *everybody knows.*
You fête the finest men in town,
Yet, oh! they won't propose.

THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY

SAUCE FOR A SAILOR

A curious expression filled her lovely violet eyes

BY EDMUND GILLIGAN

TAKE the case of poor Bartley Malone, of the schooner *Adventure*, a halibuter of the old Gloucester school. He's the one -- they speak of—the sea lawyers, I mean—when they try to figure out the whims of nature, her justices and injustices. Because it was the greatness of his heart, and nothing else, that reduced Bartley from the rank of doryman, and reduced him in person from a hearty two-hundred-pounds to practically nothing. Say one hundred and sixty, give or take a few pounds . . .

" Is there not one of you that can cook at all? Even to the extent of a few pannycakes and a kettle of tea?" It was the Skipper of the *Adventure* who thus spoke out in his most desperate fashion, which could be very desperate indeed, if he put his mind to it.

There she lay, the poor thing, a thousand miles from home and hove to under the tail end of a gale, and the cook in his bunk with a broken leg and his retirement papers all filled out in his mind's eye. A cross-sea took an awful whack at the *Adventure* and filled her up all crisp and icy, and hid the gallant Skipper. They heard him roaring just the same. " What, boys, will you have your poor Captain starve? After all he's done for you? "

Now up steps brave Bartley.

According to those heroes that were on the *Adventure*'s deck that memorable day, there wasn't a finer-looking man in the Gloucester fleet. He wasn't in his prime. No, he had forty years to go before he would hit his high mark. Just the same, he had done well. Three seasons in a halibut dory had made him the best doryman in the *Adventure*, which meant—to hear them tell it—the best on the Atlantic.

He was well travelled, too. He'd been to Boston lots of times and had been on the African run as a boy. Quartermaster on some crate that hauled freight and passengers. He had seen the Mountains of the Moon. Through a telescope maybe, but he

could describe them beautifully. He was a big man, a little on the plump side most of the time, which is right because a good doryman fattens up in the summer, knowing he's bound to need more than wool in the haily season to come. He always wore a blue woollen shirt, and a nice, round woollen cap, like a Frenchman's bonnet, which some fancy passenger had given to him, probably for describing the Mountains of the Moon. She—excuse me!—the passenger had sewn a pretty *BM* right on the forepeak, too.

Bartley touched his cap respectful-like, and gave a smart twirl to a rich brown moustache he was growing for purposes not yet made public. "Captain Dan! I—" and there his strong emotion stopped him, and all he could do was take a sweeping glance around the whooping world of whitecaps, a glance that would chill the soul of an ordinary man.

"Ah, here's my brave Bartley!" the Skipper shouted, all a-glee. "Why ain't there more like him, I ask you?" He came up the life-rope a stagger or two and looked into those brave blue eyes. "Say on, my boy!"

"Ay, Captain, I'll have my say." Bartley came aft a step to make sure that none of his valued words would be snatched off by the wind. "Captain, you don't deny teaching poor Cook his trade? No, you don't. Because I seen you myself candling eggs for him and dropping coffee into cold water to see if it was A1 and no adultery in it. Right! So you was on the point of asking—don't bother to deny it, Captain—who in tarnation is going to take this unfortunate vessel home while you are labouring in the galley for the sake of all concerned?"

Bartley straightened up a bit more, took another whack at his moustache and cried out in the noblest tone used so far, "I'll answer you, Captain. I'll take her home and right up to Independence Wharf under a whole mainsail and no nonsense about it, sir."

He waved his glorious right hand aloft, looked down at the tumbling sea and up at the clouds, hauled around smart, and shouted, thunderous, "Boys, let me have that foresail! Lively now, men! Home and mother and a lively Wednesday market!"

They do say the Skipper was fit to be tied. He had that very question on the tip of his tongue. They knew that. And they knew that as soon as he had eaten a dinner—first in three days—he meant to fall into his bunk and sleep it out until the bells of home woke him up. He began to bleat in pitiful style. Well, there was no sea to shut him up this time, so—but there's no sense in beating around the bush. Since Bartley had volunteered to be Skipper, how could he deny the other and greater service?

Down to the galley Bartley went, ready to do or die.

Wait a minute, now. Hadn't that schooner been hove to after running before the gale a deplorable time? That's true and that's why gallant Bartley set up a wholesome roar the minute he looked at the stores. Nothing. Not a quarter of beef nor a Cape Breton lamb to put into the big stove. For potatoes, he had little more than the empty sacks.

Right then and there he showed the kind of wood he was carved out of. Must have been cookish wood because he did something few cooks on the Grand Banks ever dared do. He went on deck and snatched up a beautiful halibut out of the pens while the others were admiring her lovely sails, all filled up on the homeward blow.

"What's that you got under my new apron, doryman?" This from the wounded cook, who was quietly starving in his bunk.

"What would you give to know?" asked Bartley, swerving neatly by the shack locker and into his shop. He began cutting up that big fish like all get-out.

This was dangerous. Why? I'll tell you. It's always a good table they set in the Gloucester forecastles. Dorymen or daggermen, whichever it may be, they live on the fat of the land. The fat of the sea—halibut, Sable Island haddock, and the like—this they leave to those 'longshore who care for it. It's tough enough to kill fish on the Grand Banks. We'll have no talk about eating them, too. That's what they always say. Sirloin steaks, hot muffins, and bushel bowls of salad and apple pie with half a pound of store cheese on the side—that's the Grand Banks table d'hôte. No fish. The only mutiny on record in three hundred and fifty years of dory-fishing was brought on by the serving of a tub of fish chowder.

Bartley knew all about this—in fact, he'd never tasted fish in his life—but that didn't stop him from being a hero. He cooked away, happy as a lark, cool as a cucumber.

When the first table sat down along the lockers, the Skipper panting from famine, out came Bartley with a huge bowl of chowder, a dish they'd never even seen.

"What's this?" cried the Captain.

"Potage du jour d'Afrique," said Bartley, and down it went with many a smack. He came in again with great trays smoking with halibut steaks, barely visible under a tomato sauce, that filled the forecastle with fragrance and joy.

"What's he got now?" asked the cook, who was full of chowder—and full of jealousy, of course. "By hunky-dory, looks like fish to me!"

All the ruddy, happy faces turned galleyward in brisk dismay.

" Fish all right," said Bartley, " but not out of the salt sea. So you're safe. It's Mountain Brook Trout o' Grattan."

Well, they all knew Tommy Grattan, cook in the *Mary Glen*, so they ate it all up and called for more. There were twenty or thirty apple pies left from the old cook's last endeavour. Thus they turned in with full tummies and no comments except heartfelt thanks.

Then—yes, it had to happen. Sooner or later, Bartley had to make the grand discovery. Up to the last serving, nature—or fate—was just going along with him, giving him a break. When he sat down to his own array of halibut steaks, he laughed beautifully, and forked away. He opened his mouth, which was watering, and tasted his own cooking.

He put the fork down gently.

He waited until the *Adventure* whooped up out of a trough, splashed in a poor way, and soared on. He tried again. No, he couldn't do it. This time he put the fork down for good. All he did was sigh.

What was the matter with the man? Oh, nothing, nothing much—only that gallant Bartley Malone was a born cook who couldn't eat his own cooking. If there's a harsher fate in all the known world, it's not in the records.

Bartley understood at once the tragic meaning of his discovery. He took it like a man. He did the dishes, took out his mixing-bowls again, and cried out cheerfully, " Pannycakes and bacon for tonight, boys. And Salade Beaucoup de Sardinia "—his eye having fallen just then on a case of sardines left there by mistake or devilry a voyage past. Snug in the swaying forecastle, the dorymen thanked him dreamily.

In the next ten minutes Bartley lost the first ounce he had ever lost in his life. The great Malone shrinkage had begun.

All this sounds bad for Bartley, and it was bad. You might think it impossible to be worse off than a cook starving in the midst of plenty broiling and stewing right under his capable nose. But what happens to them when the vessel ties up in Gloucester and the cooks go home? Do they starve there, too? A-hungering while their dear wives look blubbering on at their sea-tanned spouses sighing and shrinking visibly?

No, not a bit of it. Cooks are smart—barring the Skipper, they're the smartest lot in the fleet—and they marry skilled cooks. No other consideration is given to an aspiring young lady.

So in some cases it isn't the worst thing in the world not to be able to eat your own cooking. Why, it's nothing but a long fast —ten or twelve days maybe—and a fine supper when you come

down the lane with a cook's share of the voyage folded in the pocket.

No, the worst fate in the world is to be such a famished cook, and no wife to come home to at all. All men ought to say a prayer daily against such a terrible life.

When he was ashore again, Bartley sat in the pretty kitchen of his cottage—a nice old one in Folly Cove—and pondered his fate. Yet even in his worst days, there was one last thing he could always look forward to: the music of the circus—the band, the calliope, and the merry-go-round.

Well, one day in September the circus posters went up in Gloucester. The *Adventure* was home again from the Gully, hailing for another hundred thousand pounds of halibut, and poor old Bartley—yes, that's what they called him now—argued himself into going down the lane at Folly Cove and into the meadow where the circus had its canvas up. Everything and everybody was loud with music and laughter. Inside the gate, the dorymen and their wives and all the kids for miles around were having a grand time.

Bartley headed at once for the elephant tent to see if it was true they had an African elephant this time. Bad luck. They were grilling fat frankfurters down that alley. Bartley tacked hastily off, shouldering his way through the throngs in such a manner that the dorymen looked after him in pity. There was a big new sign in the next alley saying: TO THE LAPLAND WITCH. Bartley thought it was about time he had his fortune told and he was heading for the fortune-teller's tent with a great deal of hope when a blast of fragrant air from a popcorn machine hit him amidships.

He luffed. He was under way in a panic when he heard a deep voice calling politely, " Hey, you! Just step over here a moment, my friend. I've a personal message for you." This lad was a red-vested, handsome bucko with a moustache all waxed up and diamonds everywhere he could tack them, except on his tall silk hat.

Others had heard his remark and paused, plainly intending to butt in on the private business between Bartley and the barker. They were sent away by the barker who bent down and boldly pointed a gorgeous ten-cent cane at the sign blazing over his head. " You can read, Captain. I can tell that."

Bartley accepted the compliment without replying. Gazing along the rigid cane, he read the banner which declared that the mystery in the tent was *The Wild Woman of Timbuctoo.* Wild? She was more than wild, if you could believe the canvas beneath the sign. It was all filled up with a daub of a black-skinned girl,

snarling wickedly, her wrists manacled in golden chains. Her ankles were in irons, too. They weren't taking any chances on that one breaking out. Not by a long shot.

"She's savage, Captain. Absolutely savage through and through." He bent an inch farther in confidential style to let Bartley in on the real mystery. "I can tell you're a travelled gentleman familiar with the antiquities of the ancient East and the mysteries of glorious Egypt, but I assure you, sir, that in all the panoplied Orient and Occident, too, there is nothing to equal The Wild Woman of Timbuctoo. You been in Timbuctoo, Captain?"

"Well," said Bartley, "as a matter of fact, I have."

This didn't put the barker off his stroke at all for the simple reason he didn't believe it. Nobody could take *him* in. He went on, "Then for you, sir, and you alone—a special performance! For the sum of one dollar, added to the customary admission fee of fifteen cents, you may see the wild queen eat her supper. Specially prepared from her own stock of African dainties, maintained by us by daily air freight at excessive cost. Excessive!"

At that instant, the fragrance of food cooking in the queen's tent forced Bartley back a pace. He was ready to reel away when he perceived that the fragrance wasn't hurting him at all. He took a long snuff, then he handed over the money.

"You'll never regret it, sir!"

"I'm hopeful," said Bartley and he marched into the tent.

The gloom was rosily lit by a cooking-fire set in a little cage of canvas and wood. The delicious, non-repellent fragrance floated about like a gay song. Somebody in the cage was whistling cleverly, a tune so familiar that Bartley figured he must have heard it on the African run. "Hullo!" he said. He came up to the rim of the canvas wall and peeked over, lifting his hat politely. "Me no savvy Timbuctoo," said he, remembering his manners.

The queen snarled dreadfully. She shook her head of woolly curls until the combs and gewgaws of her crown jangled. All her dark body gleamed in a furious rattle of manacles and leg-irons, which her long, slender legs clanged in a spectacular rhythm. Her eyes flashed. Her noble bosom heaved beneath its bodice of real African hay. She didn't say anything because her mouth was full of those air-freight African dainties. Soon as she could, she cried, "Gee-row-a!"

"No," said Bartley, "I won't get out. I don't want to bother you, Queen. Don't want to interrupt your supper." His voice broke in pitiful fashion over that last word. He looked down into a pretty copper pot that was on a charcoal grill. It seemed empty. Nothing in it but hope.

"You savvy me Number-One cookboy topside foc'sle, Queenie?" He pulled out his share of the *Adventure* voyage—four hundred bucks in new five-dollar bills—and tossed it at her pretty feet. He pointed to the pot and made the international signal for eating. "I'm starving, missie. I—I can't eat my own cooking, and that's a fact."

For a moment, she seemed to understand. A curious expression filled her lovely, violet-coloured eyes, fixed on Bartley's. She put her hand firmly over her lips—very pretty, too—and pressed hard. If she hadn't been a real African lady, you'd have thought maybe she was going to burst out laughing. No. She picked up the mighty roll and tossed it angrily at Bartley. He nabbed it in mid air. "No offence, Queen."

Then, in a more regal gesture, she held up the copper pot and a silver spoon. His hands shaking, his mouth watering, poor old Bartley spooned up the wonderful morsel in the pot. He ate it, slowly, delicately, fearfully. A thrill of joy seized his emaciated frame. For the first time that season, he gained an ounce.

When he came down to earth, she was gone. She had slid off into the gloom, leaving all the gold handcuffs right there. Pot in one hand, spoon in the other, Bartley hurried out. The barker was gone. Twilight was drifting in from the sea. It took him ten minutes to find the little house on wheels with a simple sign: *Wild Woman and Lapland Witch.* He knocked.

A girl's voice sang out rather sweetly, "Who's there, please?"

"It's just me," said Bartley, "pot and spoon."

The door opened as he climbed the steps. In the soft lamplight a fine-looking black-haired girl stood, her finger across her lips in warning. She made a sign towards a closed door and whispered, "Who frightened her? Was it you?"

Bartley nodded. "But I didn't mean to, miss. I—well, you see, miss"—and he humbly told her his sad, sweet story.

It moved her. From time to time she sighed, and often tears dimmed her eyes. "Poor Mr. Malone! And you feel her African dishes will save you? Oh, I'd so like to help you, but what can I do? She does all the cooking for herself."

"You can do this, miss—" she had told him at once her name was Dolly O'Reilly—"Miss O'Reilly," he went on, hauling out his roll again and laying it before her, "I know the Queen is a nice girl. They're all nice people in Timbuctoo and I don't think her ma and pa would like it if they knew she was making a holy show of herself for every Tom, Dick, and Harry. They don't know, do they?"

"I don't think they do yet, Mr. Malone. I must say it's awful sweet of you to think of them."

" Nice girl like that—she ought to have new clothes. Just like yours, miss, and maybe a pretty pair of shoes and some stockings. Why, she shouldn't be running around without nice warm stockings."

" I agree with you, Mr. Malone. Indeed I do."

" Now, Miss O'Reilly, soon as she feels better I want you to buy her everything she needs, and then tomorrow night you take her to my house, right over there, and we'll have supper. I'll cook your supper and you get her to cook mine and—and if she wants to give up this wild life and be my housekeeper—why, she can be, and I'll always treat her real nice." He smiled bravely and added, " I'm not home much, you know."

Just after dark the next night Bartley came down the lane to his cottage, two broiled lobsters and a bottle of wine in a basket. He was feeling remarkably strong and, of course, very hopeful. At the gate he paused. He could see the firelight glittering on his hearth. All the windows glowed mildly. Better still, that same delightful fragrance floated through the aroma of windfall apples in his yard.

He knocked at the door. Miss O'Reilly greeted him and he entered a house full of life, full of cookery. " Where is she, miss? Is she happy? Will she stay? "

She placed a warning finger across her lips, and whispered, " Now just you leave everything to me, Mr. Malone. I've set the table right by the fire. For two—you and me—and we'll just go ahead and see what happens."

Before Bartley shook out his napkin, there was a bowl of soup before him and thick pieces of buttered toast to drop into it. " African lentil soup, Mr. Malone, and this bread—African wheat, ground in the old-fashioned way." She gave him a kindly pat on his shoulder. This thrilled Bartley, too. Nobody had patted him for a long, long time. " I'll just fix up those lobsters, Mr. Malone. You go right ahead."

Before she came out of the kitchen, the soup and toast lived in Bartley strong as the fire at which he gazed in quiet joy. By the time he had finished the main dish—same as the goulash he'd tasted in the tent—and eaten the African salad and had a glass of wine, he was a boy again. Blissful. By that time, too, Miss O'Reilly had dined well on the lobsters. Just the same, she seemed ill at ease.

" She's had her supper, Miss O'Reilly? "

Miss O'Reilly nodded.

" I hope she liked the clothes you bought her? "

She rose and put in front of him the unaltered roll of bills. " It wouldn't do. No, Mr. Malone, that's not it."

" You mean she's going back home? " The old fear of famine sharpened his look.

" No, that's not it, Mr. Malone."

" Won't you ask her to join us for dessert, Miss O'Reilly? "

At this, she couldn't stand it any longer. She struck both her hands together and said, almost in tears, " Oh Mr. Malone, can you ever forgive me? "

" Why, sure. Sure I can. What's there to forgive, miss? "

" Mr. Malone—dear Mr. Malone—oh, how could I be so cruel? Oh, it was because I liked you so much! There isn't—"

" What isn't there? Come now, miss, you know you can depend on Bartley Malone."

She took his hand in hers, and whispered, " There isn't any real Wild Woman of Timbuctoo. It's all—all a circus lie."

Bartley's heart turned cold. He began to lose weight. " There's a mistake somewhere. Why—I saw her! "

" No, Mr. Malone, you saw me."

" Oh," whispered poor Bartley, " oh! " He was stunned. Nevertheless, the warmth began again in his lonely heart. He gazed thoughtfully into the fire and listened to her explaining that she was really the Lapland Witch and had just put on the Timbuctoo togs—black stockings, wig, and stain—to take the place of the regular queen. " Where is she? " asked Bartley.

" She's in Fall River, Mr. Malone, visiting her ma who's feeling poorly." And: " I did it for my poor daddy, who owns the circus and couldn't find a really good African queen at such short notice." She rose tearfully. " I'll just do the dishes and run along, Mr. Malone. You do forgive me? Tell me you do."

Bartley gently bade her sit down and very gravely, like a sea lawyer, he propounded a question: " Miss O'Reilly, if you please—say you were lucky enough to find a good lot of string beans at the market—not a wrinkle among them—just what would you drop into the pot as a kind of finishing touch? "

" Why, Mr. Malone, if I could find it—just the right kind, I mean—I'd drop in a cut of lean salt pork. It gives a—"

He lifted his hand in satisfaction. " Miss Dolly—you won't mind my calling you Miss Dolly, will you?—happen you had a friend and he brought you a brace of green teal, how would you go about it? Happen you asked him back to supper? "

" Green-winged teal, Mr. Bartley—you don't mind me calling you that, do you?—why, I'd stuff the bird with a Baldwin apple inside, the way my mother's recipe says, and I'd kind of show it to the fire, just pass it over the coals, and serve without delay."

" Dolly," said Bartley, bringing his chair a little closer, " can I ask a very personal question? Kind of intimate? "

" Certainly, Bartley. You may ask me anything you care to. Anything! Because you are so good-hearted and so sweet. What is this intimate question, Bartley? " She brought her chair just a little closer to his.

" Over what kind of fire would you pass that teal to cook it right and keep it tender and juicy? Tell me, Dolly dear."

" Bartley dear, I wouldn't think of anything other than an applewood fire. It gives the real hot coals and if it's done just right there's a touch of apple fragrance in the crisp skin, too." He was about to ask another question, but she went on, her eyes all a-sparkle now. " Such applewood must be seasoned indoors three years. Just like the wood I put on for you tonight."

He smiled in deep content. " Now, honey, you know I'm not the sort to take advantage of a girl just because we're alone and she's in my house, and I wouldn't think of hurrying you or anything like that, but I have a still more intimate question to ask. You don't have to answer unless you really wish to, honey."

" Honey, you can ask me anything. Honestly you can."

" Happen you knew a man was coming to supper—right here, let's say—and he'd been in a schooner a thousand miles from home and home she drives under a whole mainsail—tell me, darling, what might he expect in the way of dessert? "

" Why, darling! " she cried, getting up, graceful as a gull in flight, " *I knew you were a-coming, so I baked a cake!* " And off she ran and back she came, bearing a chocolate cake with a magnificent fudge icing all a-gleam.

Bartley rose and gazed at her with deep delight. He put his arm around her and drew her closer. At the same time, he deftly thrust a fork into the fudge icing and established the fact that it was half an inch thick, which is the rule in all Gloucester galleys.

Bartley tightened and bent down to her red lips. " Miss O'Reilly, may I? " His new hunger made him seem the youth he was.

" Mr. Malone—indeed, you may."

They kissed sweetly.

The great Malone shrinkage was at an end.

★ ★ ★

IT'S A PLANT

Broccoli,
While not exoccoli,
Is within an inach
Of being spinach.

ROD MACLEAN

DUAL CONTROL

He'd give her ten minutes and then he'd go in shooting

BY BERKELY MATHER

SPENCER'S close-cropped gingerish hair, shapeless grey jacket, and carefully faked Russo-Chinese passport carried him past the check-point at Fang Yuan without question. They would probably do so again at Min Yang, thirty miles short of the Thai border. The border itself would be the acid test for there the stolid, melon-seed-chewing Hakka peasants gave place to the bright young Marxists of Shanghai, trained in frontier control work by their Russian masters.

He sat back on the hard, slatted seat and closed his eyes as the asthmatic engine jerked the train forward over the worn points. His mind went back over the events of the last six months, his precarious job with the Thai air charter company, the boneheadedness of his clapped-out Dakota, and their crash into Chinese territory. How much had Ngu Pah known? He navigated by guess and by the seat of his pants—but a hundred and fifty miles off course? Spencer shrugged. Well, even if the smiling little Rangoonian *had* sold out to the Chinese People's Republic, he hadn't engineered the crash. Not the part of it that sent the strut of the navigating-table through his own guts, anyway.

Spencer scratched himself meditatively and the movement caused the slightest rustle in the quilting of his jacket. Ten sheets of rice-paper, tissue-thin, and bearing hieroglyphics that meant God knows what. His ticket to freedom or his death warrant? They could mean either.

The People's Police had arrived half an hour after the crash. Ngu Pah was dead. Paltz, the second pilot, was concussed and slightly delirious. Spencer himself was dazed but otherwise unhurt. There had been no passengers that last trip, only freight, and the flames were just consuming the last of it. The police, eight of them, emerged from the jungle at the edge of the paddy field and advanced, submachine-carbines at the ready. Paltz, poor devil, prompted by some ex-Iron-Curtain reflex, ran. He ran like a headless hen and dropped shuddering at the edge of the clearing before Spencer realized that they had fired.

He sat where he was as they clustered round him, jabbering and yelling. After the initial kicking and thumping they hadn't treated him too badly, even when his pace failed to match theirs on the march back and he had stopped to be sick.

The fourteen-hour interrogation by three relays of American-accented Cantonese hadn't been so funny, though.

"You are imperialist bourgeois saboteur sent to spy on Chinese People's Republic—no?"

"I am an ex-R.A.F. bod trying to make a near-honest living flying a crate for a Thai charter company . . ."

"Why you fly over Chinese territory?"

"I've told you—because my navigator, poor little runt, didn't know a bee from a bull's backside—"

"What you do with your photographic equipment?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake! I've told you that too—I didn't have any."

"Who pay you? American or British?"

"In theory the Thais—but they're six months behind with my salary."

"You know penalty for spying is death but can save neck by co-operation and truth?"

And so on. Fourteen hours the first time. Twenty-four the next, and then thirty-six. Savage beatings, bamboo slivers under the toenails—cordiality, rice and vegetables, cigarettes and daru spirit—more beatings, starvation, and the cold-water treatment.

Spencer wondered idly at what point he would have broken down and talked if he had known anything. Probably about the sixth day, he decided. In actual fact he started to invent about the fourteenth day and that gave him respite for a month while they investigated.

The going-over they gave him at the end of that month, however, was worse than the initial treatment. It seemed to convince them, though, that he was just what he said he was—an air tramp off his course—and the People's Court settled for fourteen years' imprisonment and political re-education. The latter took the form of emptying the latrine buckets of the town gaol for two hours each morning and listening to Marx, Engels, and Lenin on a gramophone for the next ten.

The recordings were in Yunnanese so he was still not quite clear as to the meaning of dialectical materialism. This fact genuinely distressed the Cantonese interrogator who interviewed him each month, so Kavchenko was detailed to instruct him further.

Kavchenko was the one-legged, sickly Russian engineer on the

dam project outside the town. As dedicated as the Chinese themselves, he would sit by the hour patiently getting the finer points of *Das Kapital* into Spencer's thick head, regretfully prescribing a bamboo beating when he was deliberately stupid, or worse, irreverent.

It was ten weeks before Spencer realized the subtle change in the other's careful, pedantic instruction: the undercurrent of irony that had crept in, the idiomatic twist in his careful English, the twitch of the eyebrow or the slight lift, not amounting to a shrug, of the thin shoulder. It was a further five before he convinced himself that Kavchenko was not an agent-provocateur, that he was in fact one of that band of undercover White Russians living on borrowed time, who had half convinced the Chinese of their Communist good faith.

It was Kavchenko who obtained the beautifully forged passport, the two one-ounce gold ingots, and the Chinese clothes that had become the uniform of the Russian technical adviser in the border country; who had engineered the explosion in the sewage farm that had supposedly buried Spencer in twenty feet of ordure; and who finally had given him the papers relating to a heavy-water plant that was planned under cover of the dam project.

But all Kavchenko's careful briefing could not give him enough Russian to get him past the border-control station into Thailand. There the genuine article could interrogate him—and there the papers he was carrying would hang him. He could conceivably slip over at night, but then he would be faced, in his debilitated condition, with a hundred-mile hike over the Galu range to the railhead that was the next stage of his journey to Bangkok.

Hopeless, or almost. Hopeless, unless Samson was still flying his thirty-year-old Tiger Moth between Tsing-sao on the Chinese side and Pengu on the other. If Samson would carry him, that would give Spencer only a comparatively easy thirty miles to walk to the railhead and safety.

It was to Tsing-sao he was going now. Tsing-sao was just short of the border-control point at which the guards joined the train. The line went downhill there, so Kavchenko had told him, and the train would be moving fast. He would have to jump for it—and jump in broad daylight—and then lie up in the paddy until nightfall. It was for that reason he had risked travelling in the last and least comfortable coach, instead of the second-class one nearer the engine to which his papers entitled him. The comrade-guard had tried to explain that to him but had given it up on Spencer's blank refusal to understand him.

He looked round the long coach. It was empty now, except

for a shapeless bundle of rags in the far corner. An old peasant woman, he guessed from the black-veiled Hakka hat, quilted coat, and faded blue trousers. She had joined during the night at a wayside stop and he had tried to prevent her clambering in. He had even stamped on her fingers—his stomach turning at her muted cry. It had been like kicking a starving mongrel. He let her alone then and she had crept in the darkness to the corner where she now crouched under her huge hat, like a deformed toadstool. She hadn't moved for the six hours that had elapsed since she had got on. He was glad. He didn't want to meet, in those tired old eyes, the dumb, unquestioning acceptance of his grinding boot-heel.

They rolled slowly through a wayside station. Tat Wan. He had memorized the shape of the two Chinese characters that spelt the name from the carefully drawn picture that Kavchenko had given him. About six miles from here. A cutting, and a bend in the line that would help to shield him from any chance backward-looking eyes that might see him drop out of the end door. Please God that the old woman still slept and that the comrade-guard was engrossed in the interminable game of mah-jong that had gone on through the night in the coach just ahead.

Spencer rose, stretched, yawned, his eyes sideways under lowered lids fixed on the woman. She didn't stir. The train was gathering speed now and he judged that he had some ten minutes left. He knelt on the seat and looked idly out of the window, catching full in the face a blast of cinders and grit from the open-stacked engine. There seemed to be no heads hanging out of the forward coaches, probably for that reason.

He straightened and looked at the immobile, hunched figure again, then moved towards the rear door, his fingers fumbling at the front of his trousers in the uninhibited manner of earlier passengers. That, in this toiletless third-class compartment, would supply as good a reason as any for standing at an open door should anybody be looking back—and if he was unfortunate enough to slip and fall, he could imagine the bellowing laughter of the comrade-guard at the next station.

He swayed for a moment and then jumped.

The flints stabbed at his knees and cut his outstretched palms. He rolled sideways into the ditch and lay panting on his belly, watching the tail of the train swing out of sight round the bend—and as it did, with strained and unbelieving eyes he saw the old woman come hurtling through the last door and land, spread-eagled in the ditch ahead of him. His outstretched fingers closed round a large, jagged flint.

She lay perfectly still, one arm doubled underneath her and the

other outflung, the huge straw hat dancing across the sleepers in the eddies left by the now-vanished train. Dead, he hoped savagely, and fought down a gust of rage. Why had the damned old fool followed him? Panic perhaps—the blind Asiatic instinct to follow, sheeplike, any fool who started a sudden move. She no doubt thought that from his point of vantage by the door he had seen an imminent accident and was jumping clear. He rose cautiously, conscious with relief as he did so that he had neither broken nor sprained anything. With the rock still clenched in his fist he advanced slowly towards her. He stood looking down at her and she turned her head slightly, meeting his gaze. The rock dropped from his hand.

She was not old. Spencer was no judge of the age of a Chinese woman, but this one could not have been more than twenty-one or twenty-two by any racial standard. And her beauty—beauty of that magnolia type possessed by some Chinese women—could not be disguised by the dirt and blood that covered one side of her face. He sank to one knee beside her.

"Who are you?" he asked foolishly, then searched through his limited store of prison-gained Cantonese for the translation. She answered him in perfect, very slightly accented English.

"It does not matter. Tell me, are we near Tsing-sao?"

"The next station down the line," he answered. "If you'd sat tight you'd have reached there in half an hour—in one piece. Why did you jump?"

"For the same reason, I imagine, as you. I look for Samson—and have only bad papers."

He sat back on his heels with a quick intake of breath. "Who are you?" he asked again.

"What does it matter? If I told you my name was You-ell Lin Tsang, would it mean anything?"

"Not a thing."

She grinned impishly, then winced. "Probably because it *isn't* my name—not quite, anyway. It's Lynn Howell."

"Now all we want is the Mad Hatter and the March Hare and the party would be complete," said Spencer.

"You're far too thin for a dormouse. I suppose it is all a bit mad, though. Talking about Hatters, would you mind rescuing mine?" She rolled over and sat up, dabbing at her grazed cheek with the sleeve of her quilted coat. He rose, crossed the line, and picked up the absurd Hakka hat. When he returned to her she was holding a pistol. He stopped short, cursing softly.

"You win, you bitch. Serves me right for not braining you when I had the chance."

" Don't be silly," she answered, turning the gun round, butt towards him. " This is merely meant as proof of my bona fides. Here—take it."

He grabbed it and ejected the magazine.

" Seven rounds," she said calmly, " and one in the chamber."

He snapped it shut and cocked it. " You wouldn't have another, I suppose—ready to spring when I'm off guard? "

" I had enough trouble getting that one."

" I'll check, if you don't mind."

Without a word she raised her arms and turned away. Quickly and expertly he ran his hands over the slight form under the quilted jacket and tattered blue trousers.

" Satisfied? " she asked him without resentment.

" Sorry," he mumbled. " Prison plays hell with one's manners . . ." He hesitated. " Want it back? "

" You'd better keep it. I'm not very good with them."

He slipped the pistol into his side pocket and helped her to her feet. " Hadn't we better get under cover? " he suggested.

They climbed the embankment and crossed the dry paddy field at the top. At the edge of the stunted jungle she stopped and looked round her. " If we're both right," she said, " Tsing-sao should be to the south of that low range, and Samson's airstrip about seven miles through this jungle due west."

Then she dropped in a heap. He picked her up. She sagged like a small and pathetic rag-doll and he realized that they both suffered from the same ill—long malnutrition. Fifty yards in from the edge of the jungle he came to a small brook and, light as she was, he put her down gratefully, his heart pumping painfully. He soaked the sleeve of his jacket in the cool water and wiped the dust and blood from her face. It revived her and she sat up.

" Sorry," she said. " I don't often do that."

" You're lucky," he told her dryly. " I do—often—when I'm half starved."

She shrugged. " Well, let's hope that Samson will feed us as well as fly us."

" How did you find out about Samson? " he asked her. " I thought his activities were a closely guarded secret."

" They are," she answered, " and I'd rather not tell you how I found out about him. The less one knows in the event of capture, the less one can give away under . . . pressure."

" How right you are," he assented grimly. " There've been times when I wished to God that I *had* known something—just so I could have told 'em—to make 'em let up on me."

She shook her head. " You're wrong. It's only while they think you're holding something back that you've got a chance.

That probably doesn't make sense to you, but what I mean is—"

"I'll take your word for it," he said. "Put it another way then. How did you know *I* was making for Samson?"

"Because you are English, and because"—she giggled—"in spite of your perfect pantomime you were obviously preparing to alight at the very spot I'd been briefed to watch for."

"How the hell could you possibly know I was English?" he asked gruffly, to cover his confusion.

"Because you stopped kicking me when I cried."

"Pretty flimsy grounds. A nicely-brought-up Englishman wouldn't have kicked you in the first place. Actually I'm an Australian."

"And if I needed further proof, you shouted and talked a lot in your sleep—the way people do after the comrades have been educating them."

"All right then. You knew I was English—or British. You guessed I was going to jump the train just where you intended to. Why should that of necessity add up to Samson?"

She shrugged. "There's nothing else to get off here for. Too far from the frontier to walk—not near enough if you intend to steal a boat."

"Do you know this Samson?"

"No, except from what I've been told about him. He's a Pole. He stole a small aeroplane from the Kuomintang—Chiang Kai-shek's people—and now he runs it on a regular flight back and forward over the border. The Communists know he smuggles things, gems from the Mogok fields, opium, all sorts of things, but he is useful to them so they close their eyes to a lot. They would never permit him to run refugees out, though. There he takes a risk, but only when he thinks it safe, and only for payment in advance. If it suits him he'll sell you out to the other side."

"What is his fee?"

"Whatever he thinks you have."

"Sounds a nice type."

"He isn't. He's a foul beast and one day he will be killed—by our side or theirs."

"Let's hope he lasts long enough to fly us out." Spencer stood up. "Do you feel fit enough to press on? It's not such a heck of a way, but from what I've been told it's tough going and the best time to get there is just after sundown."

She pulled herself up by a strand of bamboo, ignoring his hand, and with Spencer breaking the trail through the undergrowth they struck off west along the bank of the stream.

It was getting dark when they came to the edge of the clearing.

There was a dim light in a bamboo basha on the other side and Spencer could make out the prim, old-maidish lines of an ancient Tiger Moth pegged down under a rough hangar. They stopped in the shadow of the trees. It had been a gruelling trek and even in the fast-fading light Spencer could see that the girl's face was white and drawn.

She sat down wearily and he felt a sudden surge of compassion for her. Lynn Howell, of all absurd names for anything so fragile and delicately Oriental. She was the daughter of a Mandarin mother and a Welsh professor of music at Shanghai University. She had gasped out her story as they pushed through the bamboo thickets. Her father had died in a Japanese concentration camp during the war, her mother more recently under a course of political re-education. What lay ahead of her? Bangkok and Hong Kong immediately—if they were lucky. But what then? The cabarets and dance halls? Damn it—not if he knew it. She was half Welsh . . . He came out of his reverie as he felt her tap his leg.

" I had better go forward alone," she said. " Samson perhaps can speak English but if he is not here there will be only Chinese—"

" We will go together—" he began.

" That would be foolish. If the comrades are there we might both be taken."

" But why should you go first? I'm a man . . ."

" All the more reason why I should go. If things are not as they should be I can pass as a Hakka girl lost while looking for strayed cattle."

She rubbed her palms on the ground beside her and transferred some of the grime to her damp face. He saw the force of her reasoning and nodded.

She went on, " If I don't return after some time you must do the best you can. If it is all right I shall come back and tell you." She held out her hand and he pulled her to her feet.

" Good luck," he said. Then on an impulse he pulled her to him and kissed her full on the lips. She hung, impassive in his embrace for a moment; then, with a queer, strangled little cry, akin to the one she had given when he stamped on her fingers the night before, she pulled away and was gone, wraithlike, across the clearing. He leaned against the tree, his heart hammering.

" Hong Kong sing-sing girl? " he said aloud. " Not bloody likely. *Poor little devil.*"

He tried to measure the passage of time, counting in groups of a hundred and twenty. He would give her ten minutes and then, by God, he'd go in shooting. Fool that he was, why hadn't he

thought of that in the first place? Tiger Moths were the first things he had ever soloed in.

One hundred and twenty at two beats to the second was one minute. He ticked the minutes off on his fingers. One, two, three, four—he could hear a distant hum of voices in the basha and once a figure came out with a lantern and waved it. What the hell did that mean? He sweated in the cool night air. Five, six, seven—it was more than seven minutes—he must be counting one to the second. Yes, he'd go in. If that damned little string-bag was flyable he'd fly it. He'd fly it to hell-and-gone across the border and risk pancaking on a paddy once over the river . . .

He didn't hear her approach till she was nearly on him. He started and his heart leapt.

"It's all right," she whispered urgently, "they'll take us. One at a time—but they want three ingots each. What have you got?"

"Oh, lord!" he gasped in dismay. "Two."

She stopped dead. "I—I only have one. I hoped . . ."

A man was approaching towards them with a lantern.

"Do they speak English?" whispered Spencer.

"Samson himself does—"

"Leave it to me. There's a way out. There's got to be." He squeezed her arm in the darkness and felt her other hand flutter on the back of his. The man grunted something and they followed him into the basha, blinking at the light.

There were three of them there. Samson himself, as he guessed the one European to be; a Sikh in greasy overalls squatting in the corner; and the Chinese who had led them in. Samson, fair, suntanned, fortyish, and handsome in a paunchy way, looked up and grinned amiably. Like an ex-Squadron-Leader turned secondhand-car salesman, thought Spencer.

"'Ullo," Samson said. "You want the joy-ride? Round the bloody Blackpool Tower, eh? We fix."

"Can you take us both? One time?" Spencer asked.

Samson guffawed. "Say! I bloody good to get her off the deck wiz myself—one time. You know how many hours that crate got, mister? You don't? I don't either. Hours? She got more *years* than I got. First she belong to Rangoon Flying Club before the war. Then the Japs get her and they fly the hell out of her. Then *I* get her—and *I* fly the hell out of her. Fly us both one time, he say! Don't make me laugh, mister."

"The two of us don't scale thirteen stone."

"But I do, mister. And I got to carry juice for two hundred miles round trip."

" When can you start? " Spencer asked him.

" First light, providing we fix "—he leered and rubbed his forefinger and thumb together—" the fulooz, cash, dough— "

" How much? "

" Don't the little sing-sing girlie tell you? *I* tell *her* all right. Three ingots, mister! No damn paper money. No damn see you next time, Samson boy! Three little yellow ingots per each —*before* we take off. You got? "

" I've got."

" Show."

Spencer leaned forward and coolly helped himself to a black Thai cigarette from the packet on the table. He turned and removed the soggy butt from the lips of the Chinese behind him, lit his cigarette from it, and then flicked the butt through the open window. The Chinese growled in his throat. Spencer laughed.

" You'll get it. Like you said, cobber." He inhaled deeply. " Before take-off. Don't think I'd bring it with me till I knew what the form was, do you? It's back there in the jungle."

Samson looked at him for a moment, then threw his head back, and roared. " You bloody hard case, eh? Goddam character. O.K.—like you say, before take-off. Lay it down—up we go. No lay it down—stay on the deck, no? "

" The girl goes first," Spencer told him.

Samson roared again. " Too bloody right! You don't like to leave her with Lalpur Singh and Peng Foo, eh? Goddam billy-goats. You got it there, mister." He tapped his forehead and Spencer grinned, tight-lipped and brittle.

Samson went on, " O.K. You go back to jungle, eh? No good to stay here. Too many people come and go night-time. When you hear motor run up, you come."

" Have you got any food? " Spencer asked him.

" Have got," said Samson. " Very expensive. Comes extra on passage money, mister."

Spencer put the little finger of his left hand in his mouth, sucked, and then dragged it out again. He threw his signet-ring on the table. Samson roared again in high good humour, picked up the ring and weighed it in his palm, and said something out of the side of his mouth to the Sikh. The Sikh grinned and shuffled out, returning a moment later with a tin dish of rice and a ball of dried fish. He dumped it on the table. Spencer picked it up and turned to the door, signing with his head for the girl to follow. They walked across the clearing in silence. Behind them they could hear Samson still guffawing.

They sat in a pool of darkness under the trees.

" Eat," said Spencer tersely.

Her hand went out towards the dish, paused—then suddenly she was in his arms again, sobbing quietly. He stroked her face clumsily, his lips caressing her hair, murmuring endearments that normally would have turned him stiff with embarrassment. This was a situation that the cabarets of Bubbling Well Road and Wanchai had not prepared him for.

"That's a girl—that's a poppet. Here—hush, lovey. Get some grub aboard. That's what's wrong with you, you're hungry. Come on now, lovely cold rice and a chunk of shark. You leave it all to me. You don't have to cry, pet. It's going to be all right. I tell you—it's going to be all right."

As suddenly as it had broken, the storm passed, and in a moment they were sitting cross-legged, each side of the dish, solemnly eating with stiff fingers. She laughed softly at his clumsiness and showed him how to ball the rice, coolie fashion. When they had finished, he relit the butt of the Thai cigarette and they smoked it in alternate puffs, lying looking up at the stars through the branches, her head on his outstretched arm. Then he ground the butt out in the soft earth and turned towards her. In the distance a night koel bird piped and was still.

The roar of the engine woke him. He lay for a moment collecting his scattered thoughts and brushing the sleep from his eyes. Then he sat up. The grey dawn light was filtering through the branches and the mist was rising over the clearing. He was alone—but beside him was a single blossom from the frangipani bush that had spread its fragrance over them through the night. On it was a single gold ingot.

He jumped to his feet—but even as he called, "Lynn! Lynn!" in a voice that was not his own, he realized the futility of it. She was gone, and he was cold and empty and alone, suffused with a pain that transcended any of the last few months. He closed his eyes tightly and beat with his clenched fists on the trunk of the tree behind him. The physical hurt of his skinned knuckles brought him momentarily to himself. He stooped and picked up the flower and the ingot and weighed both in his palm. Across the clearing the engine rose, cut, and rose again impatiently.

He turned and walked slowly across towards the plane. He would bargain with them, gain time. She couldn't have gone far. Perhaps, even now, she was looking at him from out of the surrounding jungle.

Samson waved and shouted, "Come on, mister—you think we got all bloody day? Where that damn sing-sing girl?"

The Chinese was standing by the chock-ropes, and the fixed-pitch propeller was bucking the flimsy plane against them. The

Sikh stood leaning against the slipstream, a large wrench in his hand. Spencer stopped by the rear cockpit and shouted against the roar of the engine, " Wait—she won't be long—wait—"

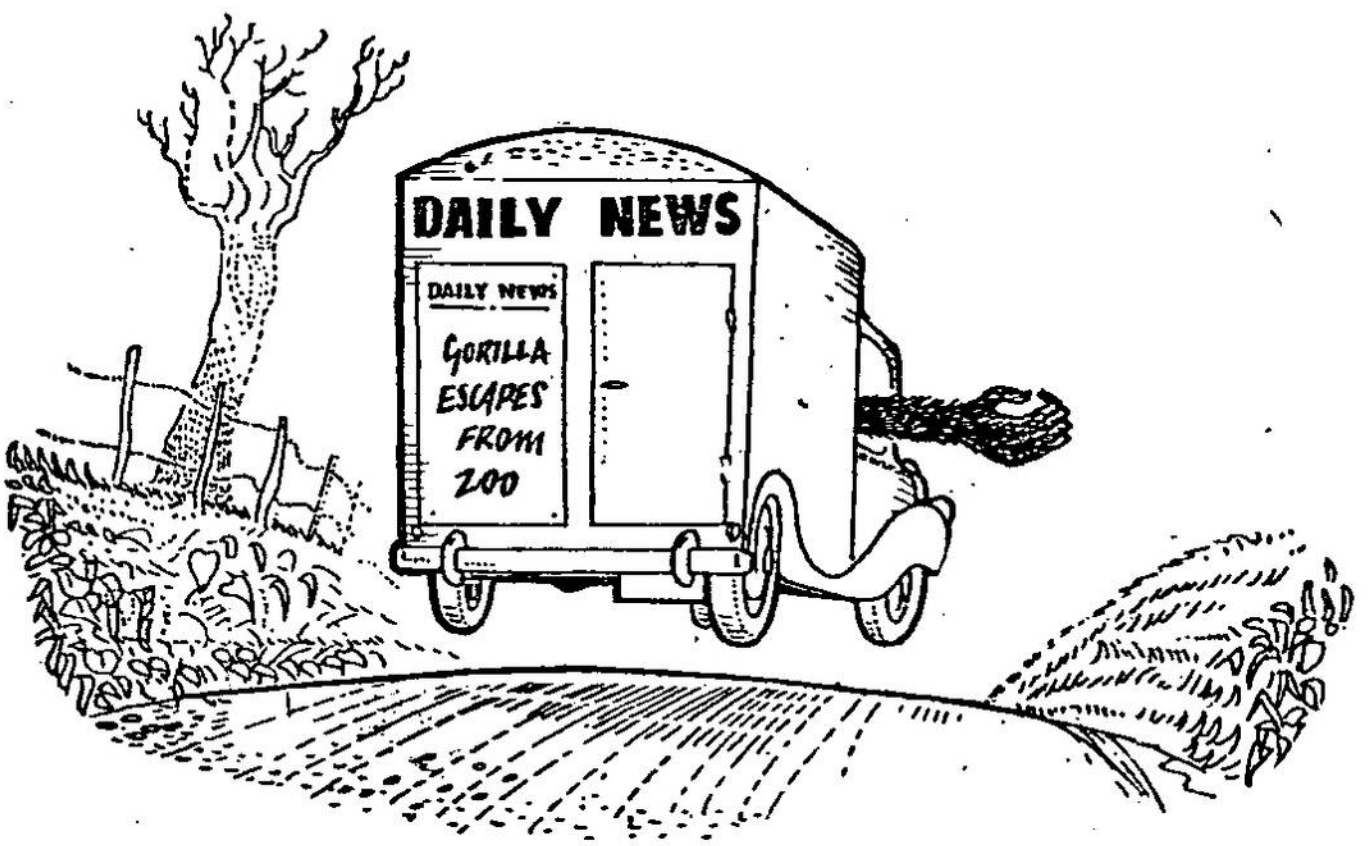
The merest sideways flicker of Samson's eyes warned him and he threw himself to one side as the wrench swung in a vicious circle. It missed his head and glanced off the quilted shoulder of his jacket, numbing his left arm to the wrist. He jerked the pistol from his side pocket and shot the Sikh in the stomach.

Samson was standing up in the cockpit, fumbling frantically inside the zip of his flying-jacket. Spencer's second bullet took him high in the chest. He spun, then plummeted sideways, and hung, head down.

The Chinese had skipped round the plane, making a shield of the metal bulk of the engine. Spencer stooped beneath the fuselage and carefully shot him through the thigh, then reached into the cockpit and cut the engine back to a gentle purr.

He heard her call across the clearing and turned to see her running towards him over the brown turf. Without a word he boosted her into the front cockpit and then struggled to pull Samson out of the other. He climbed in and motioned with his pistol to the writhing Chinese to pull the chocks away; then, fumbling at the almost-forgotten controls, he gave the Moth full throttle. Lynn turned and smiled as he reached across the cowling to pull her flying-straps over her shoulders, then took his fingers, and carried them to her lips.

The sun climbed with them over the trees, dispersing the mist. Below was the Galu Range and to the south all Thailand stretched to the sea.



A PATRICK PETRELLA STORY

CASH IN HAND

Keep your lolly in a safe
and you're asking for trouble

BY MICHAEL GILBERT

YOU do not mention the Nipper in Highside police circles except with a smile. For in his brief and exciting career he managed to cause a quite extraordinary amount of unpleasantness and ill feeling.

It started with Chief Inspector Haxtell being summoned to an interview with his Divisional Superior, Superintendent Barstow —" There's a little matter I'd like to discuss with you, Haxtell." Barstow was big, red, and almost permanently angry. In this case, no doubt, there were excuses. He himself had received a rocket from the District Chief Superintendent, and his interpretation of discipline was that if you got a rocket, you passed it on, without delay and at compound interest, to your own immediate subordinate.

Haxtell came back to Highside Police Station, kicked the waste-paper basket, and sent for Detective Sergeant Gwilliam.

" They're getting worried higher up," he said, " about the Nipper."

" Yes," said the Sergeant, cautiously. He was an expert weather prophet.

" Apparently the local Chamber of Commerce has taken it up. I'm afraid the Superintendent and the Mayor haven't been seeing eye to eye since that row they had over the last civic function. Most unfortunate. Now the Mayor sees an opportunity of taking it out of Barstow, so he's jumped in with both feet."

" And the Super jumped on you? " suggested Gwilliam, who had known his Chief Inspector for a very long time.

" Between these four walls, yes," said Haxtell. " Though the interview wasn't remarkable for any really constructive suggestions."

" It's a devil of a problem," said Gwilliam, " look at it how you will. I suppose it's no good telling these shopkeepers and people that it's largely their fault for keeping so much cash around the place? "

" No good at all," said Haxtell. " You know what they'd say. ' What are the police for? What do we pay all these rates for? ' "

" Another thing," said Gwilliam, " it can't be a fluke that the Nipper always gets into the office or shop or whatever it is, when it's empty. No doubt he cases each job carefully, but if people would only be a little more discreet—"

" A lot of it's their fault," agreed Haxtell. " But we shan't make ourselves any more popular by saying so. Our job's to catch him. You can take one man—Petrella, I suggest—off all outside duty and tell him to concentrate on it. He knows a bit about locks. It's just up his street."

So it caused trouble for Detective Constable Patrick Petrella, too. He had been on the point of asking for a holiday, his first for almost the whole of the two years he had been at Highside. He was going to visit his father, in Barcelona. After that, his plans were vague.

He listened sadly to what Gwilliam had to say, cancelled some tentative reservations, and sat down to serious study of the Nipper.

It was " Square " Peggs, the proprietor of the all-night café in Exover Street, who had first christened him Nipper. " He nips in, nips what he wants, and nips out again." In the last six months, since his work had become identifiable, the Nipper had visited Solly Moss the turf accountant, Mungo Farnes the pawnbroker, Mr. Turner who kept the big greengrocer's shop on the corner of the High Street, and Mr. Lowson's garage and repair shop.

He had taken nothing but money. How much he had taken from each was part of the mystery; but the police, scaling down the estimate of the outraged proprietors in the light of experience, came to the conclusion that it was not less than three thousand pounds in all.

" If he keeps it up for a year," said Peggs, " he'll make himself twelve thousand nicker. Then maybe he'll retire."

Petrella was fond of Peggs. He liked him for his cynicism, his philosophy, and his lack of conventional morality. Also, he had found out a long time ago that nothing much happened in Highside without Peggs knowing about it.

" He'll be after your stocking next," he suggested.

" *If* he knew where I kept it," agreed Peggs.

" Which is an admission," said Petrella, " that you do keep your spare cash somewhere round the place. Why the devil don't you bank it? "

" Might just as well give it away—to the tax collector," said Peggs. It was, as Petrella knew, an unjustifiable but widely held idea.

" What you want to do," said Peggs, " is catch him, and put him away for a long stretch."

" Tell me who he is, and we'll tab him fast enough."

" If I knew," said Peggs frankly, " I'd tell you. No honour among thieves here. He's a perishing little menace."

So Petrella took a bulky folder home with him that night, and many nights. And studied, in every possible light and from every possible angle, the depredations of the Nipper.

His methods, in outline, had the simplicity of genius. He had visited Solly Moss's office at half past one, when Solly and his two clerks were out at lunch.

He had picked with speed and efficiency the mortise lock on the office door, looked into all the desk drawers until he found the safe-key, opened the safe, removed the cash, closed the safe, replaced the key, relocked the outer door, and departed. Estimated time, ten minutes. The loss was not discovered until Solly visited his safe that evening to put away the results of a highly successful afternoon at Hurst Park.

Mungo Farnes, the pawnbroker, and Mr. Turner were both evening jobs.

They were bachelors and both lived over their premises, but took an occasional evening out. In each case the Nipper had selected the correct evening, picked the lock of the outer door and, in the case of Farnes, who was a careful man, of the inner door also; gone straight to the place where the money was kept—in one case a desk, in the other a wall cupboard—picked the lock of this, and departed with the contents.

At Lowson's garage it had been easier still, since Mr. Lowson did not sleep on the premises, but entrusted his cash to a large old-fashioned safe, the key of which he concealed, with great originality, by hanging it on a nail behind the door.

" Any leads? " asked Sergeant Gwilliam.

Two years had taught him a reluctant respect for young Petrella's flair.

" Nothing definite," said Petrella, and stopped himself yawning. He was desperately tired and had been needing that holiday

more than he knew. "Just two thoughts. The first is that he hasn't done anything very complicated yet in the way of lock-picking. He hasn't tackled a safe—he either opens them with a key or leaves 'em alone. It's just been simple three- or four-lever locks, which he's opened with a couple of picks."

"Why do a thing the hard way if you can do it soft?"

"Surely," agreed Petrella. "All I meant was this. If he could open a really difficult lock, that would make him one sort of person. A professional. And we could get at him through Criminal Records. What I'm afraid of is that he's an amateur. Suppose he's a man who's worked in some place where they cut keys—or some little workshop where they make and repair ordinary locks. He'd know just enough about locks to open the simple sort with a bit of practice."

"He's been getting plenty of practice lately," agreed Gwilliam sourly. "What's your other bright idea?"

"I just thought that if I'm right, the only way of catching him is to find the common denominator of Solly Moss, Mungo Farnes, Mr. Turner, and Mr. Lowson."

"They're all in a good way of business. And they're all so damned silly they keep their cash on the premises."

"I didn't quite mean that. I meant that if the Nipper is an amateur, he must have had some easy way of finding out all about these four people and their money—what they did with it, what their habits were, and so on. A professional could buy information like that. An amateur would have to get it for himself."

"It's a thought," said Sergeant Gwilliam doubtfully. "But it doesn't seem to get us much closer to pulling him in, does it?"

Petrella went out to have another word with Peggs. "Can you," he said, "think of any sort of link between these four people? They're all men, and they all run businesses. But I mean something more than that. Suppose they all belonged to the same club, or supported the same football team, or had their hair cut by the same barber—"

"Solly hasn't got any hair."

"Just an example."

"Yes. I take your point." Peggs reached down a small bottle, popped two white tablets out of it into a glass of water, and swallowed them absent-mindedly. "Blown up like a balloon. It's all that greasy stuff I serve. Supposing they all had the same postman?"

"Would you talk to a postman about your private affairs? What about an insurance agent?"

"Except that none of 'em wasn't insured. That's what they were beefing about."

Peggs swilled down the last white drop and said, " What about a Lodge? "

" I don't know much about Lodges," admitted Petrella.

" I don't go for 'em myself," said Peggs. " Lot of grown-up kids. But I know Solly, Mungo, and old Turner belong to one—Sons of Enterprise. Highside Lodge—and come to think of it, I believe Alf Lowson joined 'em lately."

" What do they do? "

" They have outings. Hire a coach and drink their way to Southend and back. And a party at Christmas. Men only."

Petrella extracted the address of the Lodge secretary and went thoughtfully back to Highside Police Station. He was aware that he was treading on very dangerous ground. When a lot of grown men get together and call each other brother and elect officers and wear strange emblems, they are apt to be touchy about their privacy. As it turned out, this was one possible piece of trouble which did not eventuate. At the Station he found a message waiting for him. The Nipper had moved in again.

Mrs. Porter, owner of a large confectioner's in Milton Road, had locked her shop up on the previous evening and gone to visit her sister in hospital. On her return she had noticed nothing amiss. It was not until after lunch next day that she had occasion to go to the cash box in the bedroom cupboard.

" *Mrs.* Porter," said Petrella. " Has she got a husband? "

" A widow," said Sergeant Gwilliam. " Runs the shop herself. It's her life savings, so far as I could make out."

Petrella acquitted the all-male Sons of Enterprise of his unworthy suspicions and began his thinking again. He was aware that time was running against him.

By first post that morning Chief Inspector Haxtell had received a letter which had caused him to go red in the face and beat the desk with his fist. It was from Councillor Hayes, a notorious local busybody, and it suggested—Councillor Hayes rarely stated anything, but he was a master of suggestion—that the police were applying the rule of " one law for the rich, another for the poor . . .

" I and my fellow councillors notice with regret," it concluded, " that whilst the police are only too active in arresting and persecuting "—this word had been thinly crossed out and " prosecuting " written over the top—" members of the working class who are guilty of the smallest infringement, they do not show the same activity in arresting a man who constitutes a serious threat to the livelihood and savings of the small shopkeeper."

" I wouldn't call Solly a small shopkeeper," said Sergeant

Gwilliam, when the letter was read to him. "Anyway, that's only old Hayes blowing his top. He's been wanting to get back at us because we never caught the man who did *his* house. Actually I always wondered if he did it himself for the insurance."

The Inspector ignored this libellous statement. "How's Petrella getting on?"

Sergeant Gwilliam had to admit that he didn't know. For all his placidity, he too was worried. He knew the power of local politics.

In fact Petrella was back where he had started. He was talking to Peggs. "Poor old Ma Porter," said Peggs. "How many times I told her it was asking for trouble keeping all her money in the bottom of the wardrobe. Silly old cow."

"She a friend of yours?"

"We use the same pub—when I get a night off. Which isn't often. I knew her old man. He was the only man I ever saw drink a quart of stout without stopping. Stout, not beer. Solly gave him ten to one in dollars he couldn't do it. It's the only time I ever seen Solly pay up cheerful."

Petrella agreed that it was a considerable feat, at any odds, and took his departure. He must have been tired at the time, because he was halfway home before he realized the significance of what Peggs had told him. It seemed so important that he didn't waste time going back, but dived into the nearest telephone box and rang Peggs. "You know what you were saying about Mr. Porter—"

"The one who drunk—?"

"Yes. What pub were you talking about?"

"The Bull, of course. Everyone goes to the Bull."

"That's what I thought," said Petrella. "Did you ever see Farnes there?"

"Old Mungo? Yes, once or twice."

"And Lowson? And Turner?"

"Lowson's a regular. I dunno about Turner. I expect so. They all use it. What's the idea? You thinking of organizing a stag party?"

"That's just exactly what I am going to do," said Petrella. "All the losers shall drown their losses in quarts of porter." And he rang off.

"Barmy," said Peggs. None the less there was a glint in his small black eyes. He had just begun to realize what Petrella was talking about.

That was Thursday. Two nights later, at about half past nine, the saloon bar of the Bull was full, as it usually was on Saturday night, of bright folk, bright lights, smoke, the steady-clanking

beer engines, and clanking of glasses. Holding the middle of the floor, gorgeous in a black suit which had first seen the light of day at his wife's funeral, was Mr. Peggs. Facing him, and talking almost as loud, was Mungo Farnes. Behind his left elbow appeared the red face and porcelain smile of Solly Moss.

"What I say is," repeated Peggs, "if you keep your lolly in a safe, you're asking for trouble. What is a safe?"

He paused for breath, and let in Mungo, who told him what a safe was, in language that caused even the barmaid to open her doll-like eyes.

"I'll tell you what a safe is," said Peggs. "It's an advertisement. It says, in letters a yard high, 'Come on, here's where the money is.' Right?"

The company agreed that he was right.

"It's all right criticizing," said Solly. "Where d'you keep your stocking, Peggs my boy?"

"Ah," said Peggs. "One or two people might like to know that. I'll tell you one thing. I don't keep it in the safe. And I don't keep it in the shop. And I don't keep it under my bed."

Petrella, from his post of vantage in the passageway behind the bar, thought that Peggs was doing it very nicely. Not too obvious. Just indiscreet enough to sound natural.

He cast an eye round the bar. Many of them were regulars, and he acquitted them at a glance. Nor did he think the Nipper was a woman. In theory there was nothing to prevent a woman taking to burglary, but as yet it didn't seem to be one of the fields in which they had started seeking equality with men.

There was a youth, with red hair and large feet, vaguely attached to a girl, whom he might have brought with him or might have picked up. There was an old man with a white beard, nursing a single half-pint of mild in the corner. Was he as old as he looked? The hand which raised the glass was very steady. And a clerkly person, sipping a lager, whose eyes flashed around keenly behind a pair of rimless glasses. Nothing to choose between them, really.

"Did I do all right?" asked Peggs an hour later. He was mixing himself a powerful sedative.

"Bang on," said Petrella. "If the Nipper was there he'll be after *your* life's savings next."

"You think he'll work it out?"

"Bound to. Not in the shop, not in a safe, not in your bedroom. Practically speaking, that only leaves the living-room." He cast his eye round the homely apartment. "And it won't be too difficult for him to get in. There's a side door in Exover Street. Easy lock. Then straight up the stairs. Then he's got a choice. Could be this room, or the room opposite."

"That's the bathroom. Wouldn't keep money in the bathroom."

"Agreed. Now, whereabouts in this room? I'd say the sideboard was the obvious place. Strong doors. And a nice lock. That's the place all right."

"All right," said Peggs. "So that's where I keep my money. Now what? I'm willing to help, but I'm not going to spend three weeks hiding behind a curtain waiting for a little perisher to come and help himself to it."

"Nor you shall," said Petrella. "In fact, it's quite obvious that he won't come near the place until he's seen you safely out."

"Are *you* going to hide here, then?"

"No one's going to hide," said Petrella. "It's a little irregular, but this is how I thought we'd do it . . ."

"When you say it's irregular," observed Inspector Haxtell next morning, "what exactly do you mean?"

"I thought, perhaps," said Petrella, "that it might be better if you *didn't* know about it."

"Why?"

"In case it goes wrong."

"And what happens if it goes wrong?"

"It's just possible," said Petrella cautiously, "that the Nipper might nip no more."

"You mean it might kill him?"

"It's possible, sir."

"I think I'd better know about it," said Haxtell.

"Well—you know how you pick a lock?"

"Roughly. But you can tell me again."

"It's more or less the same process, whatever sort of lock it is. You use two picks, one in each hand. The first one's the 'lifter,' the other's the 'shifter.' You feel for the retaining spring—that's the spring that puts the weight into the lock. Once you can raise that, the job's more than half done—"

Unconsciously, Petrella was demonstrating as he spoke, and Haxtell watched him, half interested, half amused. "You ought to have been a burglar yourself," he said. "All right. I've got the idea. What next?"

Petrella explained.

"It'll be a lot cheaper than keeping someone on watch," he said. "After all, he mayn't try it for months."

Actually it was three weeks later that Councillor Hayes was walking home down Exover Street. He was returning from a most interesting Council meeting at which he had delivered an address on the subject of inefficiency and dishonesty in the police

force. He was reflecting on the pleasures of democracy and free speech when he heard, quite close to him, a piercing shriek.

He looked up. It seemed to come from a darkened first-floor window. Murder? Assault? Bodily harm? Where, oh where were the police? There was a thudding of feet on the stairs, a door swung back, and a figure burst out. It came straight at him.

Councillor Hayes threw up his arms in a token gesture of self-defence. The next moment they were entangled together in a milling heap on the pavement. It was at this moment that the bright light of a torch illuminated the scene and a voice said, "Now then. What's all this?" The police had arrived.

At Highside Police Station some sorting-out took place. Councillor Hayes was recognized and apologized to. His opponent, who turned out to be a young man with red hair and large feet, was asked for explanations, which he found it embarrassing to give. His case was prejudiced from the start by the fact that during the struggle, an undoubted set of pick-locks had fallen from his coat pocket. The fact that he was wearing cotton gloves and rubber-soled shoes might, of course, have had some innocent explanation; but, having extracted his name and address, Inspector Haxtell thought it worth detaining him while he sent a man round to his lodgings, where a number of very curious objects came to light including a complete set of key blanks, a high-class set of metal saws, and more used one-pound notes than any young man starting out in life ought to possess.

Faced with this fresh evidence, the young man decided, at a latish hour that night, to come clean. The Nipper was caught.

The publicity and prestige that Councillor Hayes derived from the matter were so considerable that there seems no doubt that he will be Mayor next year. There was even talk of a public subscription. Had he not, single-handed, succeeded where the whole police organization had failed?

Inspector Haxtell decided, on reflection, to say nothing at all. He was thus spared from having to explain that Petrella had carefully wired the lock mechanism in Peggs's sideboard to the main electricity supply of the house, ensuring an extremely severe shock to anyone who tried to pick it.

Anyway, it would have meant bringing Petrella back from Barcelona where he was enjoying a well-earned holiday.

★ ★ ★

Before I got married I had six theories about bringing up children: now I have six children and no theories.

LORD ROCHESTER

O Love! that stronger art than wine
Pleasing delusion, witchery divine

APHRA BEHN

Brave Music

"We made love and then sent for another pitcher of beer with the drops of its coldness on the glass and when the girl brought it, I took it from the door and I placed the coldness of the pitcher against the back of Finito as he lay, now, asleep, not having wakened when the beer was brought and he said, "No, Pilar. No, woman, let me sleep." And I said, "No, wake up and drink this to see how cold," and he drank without opening his eyes and went to sleep again and I lay with my back against a pillow at the foot of the bed and watched him sleep, brown and dark-haired and young and quiet in his sleep, and drank the whole pitcher, listening now to the music of a band that was passing. You," she said to Pablo. "Do you know aught of such things?"

"We have done things together," Pablo said.

"Yes," the woman said. "Why not? And thou wert more man than Finito in your time. But never did we go to Valencia. Never did we lie in bed together and hear a band pass in Valencia."

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

Sun-kissed

Still, splendid through love's sunshine, I behold
The looming hills of time a-flame with gold.

ARTHUR CLUTTON-BROCK,
The Miracle of Love

Unmasked

" Tell me something," Chekhov said. " Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your love affair."

" What love affair? It's you who are writing love stories, not me."

" I don't mean a fictitious one. A real one. You must have been in love with someone."

" I don't know."

Crowds of people were moving past us, the women rustling their dresses and everybody making a noise. Not the usual well-dressed crowd, but a kind of fairy-tale crowd, a crowd in a dream.

Instead of women's faces, black and coloured masks with narrow slits for the eyes. Here and there animal faces protruded from under the raised hoods of the men's dominoes, and their boiled shirts dazzled the eye. And over it all came the intoxicating strains of the orchestra playing waltzes and passionate airs.

My head was beginning to swim a little, my nerves were on edge, my heart beat fast and now and then seemed to stop beating altogether. I pressed my shoulder against Chekhov's shoulder and gazed closely into his eyes.

" I loved you," I said to him. " You, you . . ."

LYDIA AVILOV, *Chekhov in My Life,*
translated by David Magarshack

Bright Vision

Desire leaps up, and poised on high
Love's gaze—from eyes askance—
Scans in delight of sea and sky
The vineyards of Romance.

WALTER DE LA MARE, *Romance*

Vanished Splendour

Passion and tears and adoration and the glories of the summer night returned, and the calm sweet face of the woman appeared, and he thrilled at the soft touch of her hand on his flesh.

She shone as if she had floated down into the lane from the moon that swam between films of cloud above the black circle of the oaks.

She led him away from all terror and despair and hate, and gave herself to him with rapture, showing him love, kissing his tears away, pillowing his cheek upon her breast.

His lips dwelt upon her lips, his mouth upon the breath of her mouth, her arms were strained about him; and oh! she charmed him with her voice, with sweet kind words, as she offered her sacrifice. How her scented hair fell down, and floated over his eyes, and there was a marvellous fire called the moon, and her lips were aflame, and her eyes shone like a light on the hills.

All beautiful womanhood had come to him in the lane. Love had touched him in the dusk and had flown away, but he had seen the splendour and the glory, and his eyes had seen the enchanted light.

ARTHUR MACHEN, *The Hill of Dreams*

Fare You Well

Youth hoists the white-winged sail,
Love takes the longing oar—
The oft-told fairy tale
Beside the silver shore.
Soft lip to lip, and heart
To heart, and hand to hand,
And wistful eyes depart
Unto another strand . . .

PHILLIPS STEWART, *Hope*

CREEPING SHADOW

In the silent mist-sealed house
panic caught at the girl

BY MARK DERBY

"I WANT to warn you," Alice Choy said. She spoke as she always spoke, not with the easy assurance you might expect of a millionaire's wife, but with a frown over her shy Chinese eyes and a sigh in her voice. "I want to warn you, my dear. If I die, my husband will ask you to marry him."

Kellie Shaw's black-lashed, sea-blue eyes blinked in astonishment. "If you *die*! But, Mrs. Choy, you're not going to die. You're almost well again."

Alice Choy passed a diamond-ringed hand across her pale forehead. "If I die," she said again, "he'll want you to marry him. But you mustn't. You mustn't."

She looked strangely like a prisoner, Kellie thought, in the overlavish bedroom, with its ultramodern furnishings in olive and gold, the heavy gold toilet set on the dressing-table, and the gold-curtained, clifftop windows that commanded a breathtaking view of Hong Kong harbour and the blue hills of China.

But it wasn't only here that the wife of East Asia's second richest man looked trapped; she'd looked the same way on her visits to the hospital before her illness, when so many of the poor Chinese patients in Kellie's ward had learnt to bless the simply dressed woman with the sad eyes, who was ready with such practical help in their distress. Suddenly Kellie realized that it was life itself that had turned into a trap for Alice Choy, and she was looking out at her through the bars.

Poor Alice Choy! Perhaps it was just that she had nothing more to look forward to. Kellie, who had so much to look forward to, found herself momentarily choked with pity. She thought of Brad, whose ship would be back in Hong Kong tomorrow, in whose arms she'd be dancing tomorrow night. So much to look forward to . . .

But something, too, to look back on. Her eyes went dark as the shadow sprang out of the past to chill her.

" I feel so guilty," Alice Choy was saying, " keeping you shut up here when all the patients in Ward Five need you so badly. Dr. Rawson told me yesterday to hurry up and get better so that he'd have the hospital's best nurse back."

The shadow darkened suddenly.

The hospital's best nurse . . . So that was Dr. Rawson's verdict. But there had been another. Not exactly a verdict, but a rider to a verdict. And across two years and ten thousand miles of land and sea came the echo of the jury's verdict at that Irish inquest: *Death by Misadventure. But we are of the opinion that had Nurse Shaw taken a more serious view of her duties the fatal accident might have been averted.*

It was, after all, no different from the verdict Kellie had passed on herself before she'd entered the courtroom. She had already handed in her resignation. The hospital directors, though, had been kind. In consideration of her excellent record up to that terrible night, they had made no mention in her testimonial of the jury's criticism, which they considered excessive. They knew how overworked she had been for months in the understaffed ward, knew about the desperate headaches she'd suffered from, and the leave she'd sacrificed to allow a fellow nurse to go to her mother's sick-bed.

And they'd known, too, her one remaining wish: to atone for the inattention that had played its part in a patient's death by spending the rest of her life in faithful, devoted nursing in a world where there were never enough nurses.

So she'd been able to travel to the other side of the earth and offer her services to the understaffed Chinese hospital; and when last month Brad had asked her to marry him, she'd attached a condition to her yes . . . so long as she could stay on at the hospital after the honeymoon.

It was six weeks now since Mrs. Choy had collapsed and asked Dr. Rawson if her favourite nurse could be released from the hospital to attend her; six weeks since Kellie had been whisked out of the drudgery of Ward Five up to the luxury of Stephen Choy's great house on the Peak. During that time her friendship with Alice Choy had deepened and she had guessed the reason for the profound unhappiness that was at the root of her friend's illness.

And as her mind turned to Stephen Choy, she saw his huge new pearl-grey Rolls Royce climbing the drive. To Alice Choy she said, " Mr. Choy's back—with another gardenful of flowers to cheer you up."

Alice Choy shook her head. " It's you he comes to see, not me. All those flowers are really for you, not me."

Kellie just laughed, her vivid eyes and teeth flashing in the morning sunshine. "It's surely because you didn't sleep last night that your head's so full of fancies this morning," she said lightly. "The car's full of roses—wait till you see them!"

Stephen Choy's arrival set his house in a flap, as it always did. He gave a shout, and servants' footsteps raced up and down stairs and across polished floors. The murderous watchdog that he'd recently bought barked and tore savagely at the door of his great cage on the kitchen roof. Alice Choy lay back and closed her eyes as if suddenly exhausted.

Stephen Choy had been to Macao for two days—on business, so he said. Because he was the reason for her patient's unhappiness Kellie didn't like him, but until today she'd ignored him during the occasional short visits he paid to the sickroom. Today wasn't quite the same. Alice Choy had the extraordinary idea that he wanted Kellie as his second wife if another opportunity to marry ever arose; so for a moment Kellie pictured Stephen Choy as a husband.

She shivered. He was still vigorous and youthful-looking, though not far short of fifty. A little heavy for his height, but strongly built, with a poker face as well cut as his light tan suit, and small eyes with a stony glint to them that contradicted his genial smile. And yes, his first smile was for Kellie. She noticed it, but told herself she was nearer the door and consequently he'd seen her before he saw his wife.

Servants hurried at his heels with fine porcelain vases holding a hundred American Beauty roses flown from California—the flowers Alice Choy had alleged he really brought for herself, Kellie suddenly recalled. And it was to her that he turned, after greeting his wife, and said, "Tell them where you want them." She was to tell the servants where *she* wanted the costly flowers . . .

She watched Stephen Choy.

"Good night? Sleep well?" He was always curt and perfunctory like that with his wife.

"No, Stephen," Alice Choy said. "It was the dog."

"Dragon?"

"Yes. I hear him prowling round the house, sniffing under this door, and scratching at the panels, growling horribly. I'm afraid of him, Stephen."

He laughed. "Fine! He's there to be afraid of. That burglary last month cost me forty thousand dollars. If another burglar breaks in now Dragon's loose in the house at night, he'll never get out again."

The sick woman shuddered. "Won't you take him away, Stephen? He's a man-killer."

"Yes," her husband nodded complacently, "he nearly killed a man at the training-school. If I hadn't made a high bid for him just then, they'd have shot him."

"Till I'm better," Alice Choy pleaded, "please take him away."

"You'd prefer more burglars, would you?" he grinned unsympathetically.

"Yes," she said simply. "What is forty thousand dollars to us?"

"A high price to pay for a night's sleep for a fanciful woman," he answered, only half laughing. Then he changed his tone. "But I'll see about it, my dear. What do you think, Nurse?"

The change of tone had been for her, Kellie realized, as she faced him boldly. "I hate the beast, though I know it's not his fault he's so vicious. He's been driven crazy, that's all. And I'm against anything that disturbs a patient of mine. If you won't get rid of him, then you must send Mrs. Choy to a hospital. She must have rest."

The millionaire was looking back at her with preoccupied eyes, as if hardly hearing what she said. But he roused himself after a moment, and said quickly, "Yes, yes, Dragon must be taught a lesson." From one pocket he took something she couldn't see and from another his gold lighter. She saw him flick the lighter, touch the flame to whatever it was in his other hand, lean far out of the window, and throw something down.

The next moment hell broke loose. It was a Chinese cracker he'd lit and thrown into the killer dog's cage on the kitchen roof. The shock of the echoing, staccato explosions mingled with the panic and fury of the brute's savage yelps.

"Look at him!" Choy cried above the din. "He knows who's master here."

Shuddering as she pictured the mad beast's red eyes, Kellie faced Choy with set lips. "This is a sickroom," she said, "and I'm in charge here. You'll have to leave."

The hard eyes made a lie of the genial grin. "Ordered around in my own house," he laughed. But when he caught the gleam in Kellie's sea-coloured eyes he changed his tone again. "I'm sorry. That was thoughtless of me. I beg your pardon, Nurse." *Her* pardon, not his wife's . . .

He left the room without even a glance towards the bed where Alice Choy lay with a frown of desperation over her tightly closed eyes.

"When I married Stephen," Alice Choy said, returning to her subject a little later, "he had nothing but a few debts, and

I had very little money. Sometimes I went hungry because there was only enough food for one. Now he's one of the richest men in Asia, richer than most sultans and maharajas. And I've known for some time that he's hankering after a European wife. If I die, as soon as I'm in my grave he'll ask you to marry him. You'll see."

"But really—"

"No, listen, my dear. I want you to remember this. You must never marry him. I'm not the only woman he's made unhappy. He's ruined so many lives. Don't give him the power to ruin yours."

Kellie was relieved when Dr. Rawson's arrival cut short her patient's morbid mood. He chatted for a while, and when he left, Kellie followed him out to receive instructions behind the closed sickroom door.

"She'd be fine if she could sleep," he said. "Trouble is, she's developed such a tolerance to drugs that they can't help her any more in safe doses. So it has to be something stronger." He handed Kellie a tiny phial containing three yellow tablets. "Don't like using these things," he frowned. "Give her every chance to get to sleep normally, and if she's still restless at midnight, give her *one* of these. Maximum dose, one."

She took the phial and, as the doctor went down the wide, richly carpeted staircase, opened the door of her room, which was really Alice Choy's dressing-room and adjoined the sick-room. She started back when she met Stephen Choy face to face inside the door. He was just setting down the silver-framed photo of Brad she kept on her bedside table.

"I've been testing the doors," he said easily. "The latches and locks. With Dragon loose at night, it's important for the doors to close effectively."

"But you're going to get rid of him."

"Of course," he said quickly. "As soon as I can arrange it. Not so easy, finding a place for a dog like that."

Kellie said, "Have him destroyed. You and the others have made such a monster of him that he's not fit to live."

"He's all right," Choy said, "when I'm around. He knows who's master. You know, Kellie, nobody stands up to me for long. Man or beast. Or woman, either."

She turned away without replying and went through the connecting door into the sickroom.

She was beginning to hate Stephen Choy. She hated him using her Christian name, prowling around her room, staring at Brad's photo, seeing her nightclothes, maybe lifting the lid of the small attaché case where she kept Brad's letters and other

private possessions, including the newspaper cutting with the report of an inquest in Ireland . . .

Two hours ago she had been merely indifferent to Stephen Choy. Now she began to hate him.

That was midday. By midnight it was clear that nothing but the new drug Dr. Rawson had prescribed could give Alice Choy the rest that her exhausted mind and body needed so desperately.

Soon after eleven, Kellie had been delighted to watch her patient slip into a natural sleep; but only twenty minutes later Dragon suddenly sprang at the sickroom door, clawing the rosewood panels and growling savagely.

With a sharp cry the sick woman woke in terror. Soothing her briefly, Kellie strode into the sitting-room and called Stephen Choy on the house phone.

"If you don't have that dog away from these doors in two minutes, I'm going to call the police," she snapped, and hung up.

A few moments later she heard Choy's great whip cracking and the mad dog's paws scraping across the polished floor as Choy dragged him to the stairhead. By that time she'd dissolved one of the three yellow tablets and watched her patient drink.

Not more than fifteen minutes later Alice Choy was in a deep sleep, and Kellie herself was free to sleep at last after twenty hours of almost continuous duty . . .

Four hours later she woke to nightmare.

Stephen Choy was calling her urgently from the sickroom, where she found her patient in a coma. By the time Choy had contacted Dr. Rawson by phone, it was all over and Alice Choy's tragic life was ended.

After that, the nightmare grew indistinct, blurred. There was Dr. Rawson frowning in amazement, demanding sharply whether she'd given more than the one tablet he'd emphasized must be the maximum, and her confident answer that of course she'd given only one; Stephen Choy's explanation that on entering his wife's room to see whether she'd got to sleep, he'd found her scarcely breathing, and awakened Nurse Shaw; Dragon howling in his cage as if he knew that death had come in the night; the chill breeze through the window, and the constellation of the lights of Kowloon and the ships in the harbour; Alice Choy's white, dead face, with the calm of peace on it at last; the new terror that had come to life, linking the night with that ghastly night in the Irish hospital two years back . . . Nightmare.

When the doctor had gone, she lay on her bed in the darkness, numbed with grief for a patient who had been a friend, tormented by the memories the night had aroused of that other night when

a patient had died just as inexplicably. Not, of course, that there could be any question this time of error on her part, even innocent error . . .

Suddenly she started up in the darkness that was just thinning to grey dawn. Yes, she was sure. But she'd been sure that other time; and she'd been wrong, tragically wrong.

When she'd switched on the light she frowned at herself in the tall mirror across the room. This was mere panic. All the same, she went over to the small attaché case and drew out the tiny phial from under the sheaf of Brad's letters. The phial with the two yellow tablets.

Only there weren't two yellow tablets. It was empty.

Again. It was happening all over again, the never-forgotten horror that had so nearly wrecked her career and her faith in herself. That time, the people who best knew her and her work had refused to endorse the jury's view. She'd been run down and grossly overworked, and the accident had been ninety-per-cent accident. That's what her Matron and the hospital directors had decided. But now . . .

This was final failure. She couldn't explain it—perhaps a psychiatrist could—but it was clear that she wasn't fit to have patients' lives entrusted to her. It was all over, even her devoted bid to make up for that first tragic error.

A gentle knock sounded on the door. Drawing her dressing-gown close around her, she opened the door, and there was Stephen Choy in a robe of heavy crimson Chinese silk.

He said, " There's something I must tell you. What I told Dr. Rawson wasn't true. I went to my wife's room because I heard her calling. She was having a sort of fit. She told me she was dying and she was sure it was the new medicine that was killing her, the three yellow tablets you'd given her— "

" I only gave her one," Kellie gasped, stubbornly, desperately.

Choy looked surprised. " She said three. And she said they were killing her."

There was a strangle-grip on Kellie's throat, suffocating her, she could hear her panicked heartbeats in the silence after Choy's soft-spoken words. She started to say, " Mr. Choy, I'm absolutely certain . . . " But she'd been absolutely certain that other time. And absolutely wrong.

" I only wanted to say," Choy went on, " that I didn't tell the doctor that, and I don't intend to tell anybody. Because, of course, I understand. You've worn yourself out nursing my wife single-handed. You were exhausted from lack of sleep. A coroner might not understand, but I do. Perfectly. It was an

error, a tragic error, and nothing can undo it now. So the secret is safe with me. I wanted you to know."

Kellie took a slow pace back from him, her black-shadowed eyes wide with horror. "You mean," she exclaimed, "you'd conceal an error that killed your wife?"

He took a pace forward, so that they were close together again. "If it saves my future wife an ordeal—yes."

And suddenly Kellie knew. While the light in the room changed slowly as a soft mist crept silently up to seal the windows, isolating the great house like a gag suffocating a victim, she slowly worked it all out.

"*You* killed her!" she cried out, backing towards the mist-choked window. "To push your crazy plan to marry me. The way she warned me. You—you're mad!"

Then she was fighting him, fighting the hard arms that seized her, the greedy lips that bruised her mouth. After thirty humiliating seconds, she escaped him and fled into the sitting-room. But before she could seize the telephone and dial the police number, he was beside her, his storm of passion abruptly calmed, his voice grimly low.

"I've told you already, Kellie, nobody withstands me for long. Now listen. If you keep quiet and I keep quiet, the best years of our lives lie ahead."

She said, "You were prying in my room this morning and overheard what the doctor said when he gave me those three tablets. And you'd found that cutting and read the evidence at that inquest. And you thought you'd set a trap for me. You got into my room again after your wife and I were asleep and stole the two tablets and forced your wife to take them. You were mad enough to believe you could get me that way."

He only repeated his last words. "If you keep quiet and I keep quiet, the best years of our lives lie ahead. Or . . . there's another way." He gestured towards the pit of mist below the wide window.

"At the inquest—the inquest on you, I mean—I shall testify that I found you distraught and, after confessing something about killing a patient for the second time, you threw yourself out of the window above the cliff before I could stop you. That's the other way."

Her dive for the door was so sudden that she was at the foot of the wide staircase, tripping over his long dog-whip, before he'd reached the top step. The great house was silent; none of the servants had been told yet that their mistress was dead, and the dog Dragon had been driven back into his cage before Dr. Rawson had been admitted.

She burst out of the front door and slammed it behind her, stumbled down the steps and the steep drive, had almost reached the tall step when a loud cry halted her.

"Stop!"

Involuntarily she turned. Through the thin curtain of dawn mist she saw Stephen Choy in his red robe leaning over the balcony above the front door, the long whip in his hand.

"Come back," he called harshly. "Or shall I send Dragon after you?"

He cracked the whip as he spoke, and the snarling muzzle of the nightmare dog shot up behind the balcony rail. As soon as he saw her, the brute let out a murderous howl.

Kellie hesitated a second; then she knew she was beaten. When Choy cracked the whip a second time she turned with bitter slowness and climbed back to the front door. She could face anything rather than the dog; against anything else she might stand some sort of a chance.

Choy opened the door. The dog was crouching on the fifth step of the stairway, red eyes glaring, black spine bristling, held back by his fear of the lash.

"You see?" The tone was quiet, reasonable. "What did I tell you? Nobody gets the better of me."

Beaten, exhausted, Kellie didn't answer.

"Look at this brute," Choy went on, flicking the whip-lash across the crouching beast's muzzle. "If I give him the word he'll spring and tear you to pieces. Actually, it's me he hates—he'd far sooner tear me to pieces. But I'm his master. He's learnt his lesson. Anybody I deal with learns it sooner or later—sooner if they're wise." He added, "That's something to remember."

Then he smiled. A terrible smile. Lips a mask of friendship, eyes frozen in the pitilessness of a slave-driver. "The rest of tonight we'll forget. Instead, let's think a little about our future."

He came over and touched her. In a passion of horror and loathing she turned on him, striking him wildly across the eyes.

The violence of it caught him off balance. As he staggered back with a hand up to his dazed eyes, his foot slipped on the polished floor.

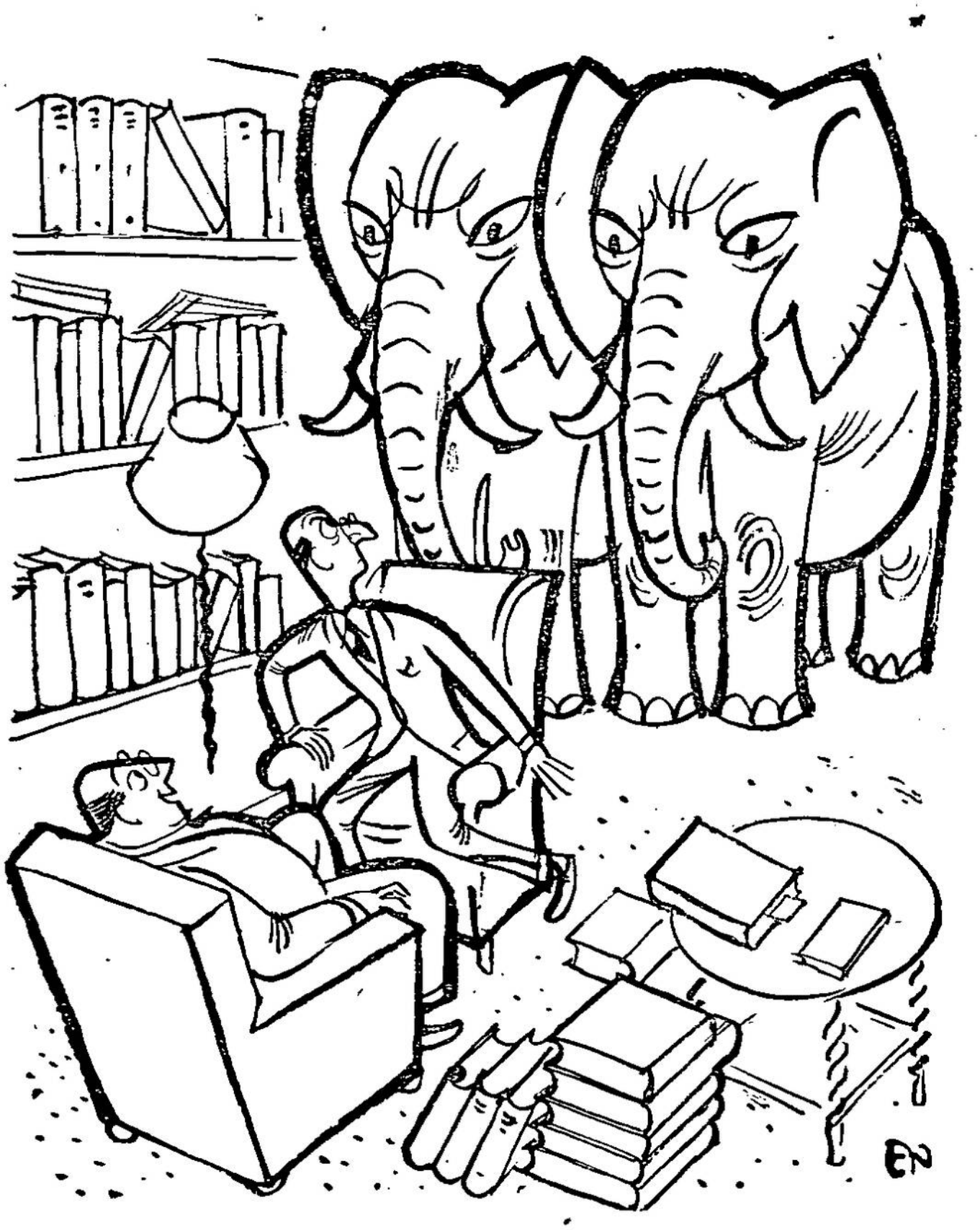
He fell heavily, cursing and sprawling, while the whip skimmed out of reach across the floor. And in that moment the dog sprang.

From the fifth step of the staircase the killer dog sprang, greeting his hour of revenge with an exultant howl. Choy was scrambling frantically for the whip, but the dog was faster.

The slamming of the front door behind Kellie couldn't drown Choy's cry of terror.

Kellie ran, stumbling, gasping, sobbing, down the steep curving road, until suddenly she ran right out of the mist into the clear sunrise. She halted then, breathless, gazing through tears across the crowded harbour.

A trim red-and-white freighter was coming in from the south-east. Maybe not Brad's ship—she couldn't see clearly through her tears—but his was due that morning, and before night she would be in his arms again.



They're cross because I won't let them be book-ends.

KING OF POSITANO

He could do anything except lose face

BY FELICIEN MARCEAU

"BUT I love her!" Gennariello exclaimed sorrowfully through the swift snipping of his scissors

It wasn't what I'd call a hairdressing salon; that would make one think of mirrors, candelabra, electric dryers, and goodness knows what else. Gennariello's shop at Positano was a single room, nine foot square, on the alley level. It did contain a mirror, a very small one, which, when you looked in it, gave you a Jack Hulbert chin. The rest of the fittings consisted of a whatnot on which stood a spray and some bottles; an armchair, occupied at the time by the Marshal of the local carabinieri; and an upright chair in which there sat an old man wearing a blue shirt and an air of distinction.

There being no more chairs, a third client, rather younger, wearing a singlet, sat on the threshold, his feet sticking out into the alley.

"I love her," Gennariello repeated, leaning affectionately over the Marshal's oily tresses.

Each of the customers evinced his interest in a different dumb-show. The man of distinction wagged his head judiciously. The Marshal, unable to follow suit—even a soldier refrains from wagging his head when there's a pair of scissors by his ear—raised his eyes eloquently to the ceiling. The young man squatting on his heels could give freer expression to his feelings; hands, shoulders, back, he used them all to express a whole cartload of first truths.

"It'll turn out all right in the end," said the Marshal.

"Her father won't give his consent," Gennariello retorted sombrely. He held up a lock of the Marshal's hair and gazed at it dreamily, as if he wasn't quite sure what to do with it.

Outside the shop, people were trudging past the door with that fast-slow walk that a steep slope imposes: a man with peaches in a basket; a small boy with a cup of coffee on a tray; a woman tourist with sunburn patches on her back and nose. The man of

distinction yawned. Pietro—the young man on the threshold—stretched himself, groaning luxuriously, and his shoulders rippled, burnt almost black by the sun.

"And now this Neapolitan turns up," Gennariello went on. "Nunziatina tells me he'll be coming again next Sunday."

At that Pietro came to life. He turned round. "Sunday?"

"Yes," said Gennariello piteously.

"That's going too far. Something must be done."

The Marshal raised his sallow eyelids. "Now, then, lads!" he said. "Don't do anything foolish." Then, addressing Gennariello with a touch of asperity: "My hair. Over here." A hint that was by no means uncalled-for, as in the heat of conversation Gennariello's scissors had strayed from the Marshal's head and were clicking away several degrees off course.

Gennariello's story was a simple one: he was in love, and his love was thwarted. It had all started two or three months before—at the beginning of June, to be precise. Gennariello had known Nunziatina for a long time before that, without the sight of her ever stirring him. Then one day . . . Well, there's no knowing how these things come to pass: on Wednesday, you're all right, on Thursday, you're in love.

One day, Gennariello was walking up the steps—Positano is perched on a steep cliff that overhangs the sea, and its alleyways form one endless succession of ladderlike stairways. Well, then, Gennariello was valiantly climbing up one of these ladder-streets when he caught sight of Nunziatina in front of him, dressed in a lemon-coloured frock, carrying a basket of vegetables on her head. Gennariello tried to think of something to say in passing—some harmless remark such as a boy makes to a girl. He was panting slightly, and so was she. They looked at each other.

There was no one else on that ladder. On one side, the high wall of large rough stones: on the other, through a crack between two houses one could glimpse the sea. There, posed on that step, they stood, lost between heaven and earth, the two of them, Gennariello and Nunziatina. And love. There, too, stood love, shakily poised between one step and the next.

Nunziatina was smiling, but it was a very faint, almost reluctant smile, which only just came to the surface. Gennariello's throat felt dry. Finally he said, "Your basket . . . it isn't too heavy?"

"No," said Nunziatina. Raising one hand, and still smiling, as if to show that her gesture was her contribution to the talk, her way of encouraging him to go on, she steadied the basket.

She looked lovely, Nunziatina, standing like that. A rather

sturdy type of beauty, perhaps, but with youth and health, and the promise of robust pleasures. She had a low forehead, but a retroussé nose, and great black eyes that shone. Her lemon dress accentuated the glossy tan of her neck and shoulders. As for Gennariello, he was just like the hundred thousand other young southerners who almost defy description, so widespread has the type become, with their regular profiles and wavy black hair. His expression, however, was modest and reserved. A nice-looking boy, with the additional appeal of being unconscious of it.

When the first wave of emotion had subsided, they went on up the stairway. They no longer spoke to each other: words had become unimportant. At each step, Nunziatina's hair, spread about her shoulders, rose and fell with the same movement as the sea, some fifty yards below.

Since then they had seen a lot of each other. They went for walks together, always slightly out of breath—partly from emotion, partly from the stairs. One day, as they were sitting on the parapet at the edge of the road, Gennariello took hold of Nunziatina's hand. She made no move to withdraw it. Mad with joy at such a startling manifestation of affection on her part, Gennariello set out the next day, in his best black suit, and called on Don Pasquale, to ask for his daughter's hand.

To show he knew his way about, he armed himself with a splendid cassata ice, carefully wrapped in glazed paper, but his heart was beating fast, nevertheless. It was an important moment—also, of course, there were those damn stairs.

And then, Nunziatina's father was not just an ordinary man.

Don Pasquale lived at Positano with much the same feelings as a king must have in exile. Actually, he had been born there, in that village of stairs, but when he was about seventeen, haunted by the almost-legendary memory of one of his uncles who had been a notorious member of the Mafia, he had set out for Naples himself. There, thanks to his natural gifts, his energy and his ingenuity, he had rapidly become one of the " brains " of Vicaria, the gangster headquarters of Naples.

At thirty, he had been shrewd enough to marry the rather ugly first cousin of the famous Peppone, another local light who, emigrating to America, had made an impressive career for himself in the wake of Al Capone. By marrying into the family, Don Pasquale had been accepted into the top ranks of that particular aristocracy. From that time he had finally adopted the pompous bearing, the slow gait, the chill courtesy, the suits of tan or eau-de-nil, the jewelled watch chains—all the accessories that distinguish the Neapolitan man of character.

In the local dialect such a man is called a guappo, and that is a difficult word to translate. It is a combination of tough guy, big guy, wise guy, with a touch of dandy thrown in; a person born to command and aware of it, filled with a dizzy sense of the honour that has been vouchsafed him merely in being himself. Which is why he places such importance on honour. Living largely on the reverence he inspires, the guappo can do anything and everything—except lose face.

Some of them even go in for almost-honest lines of business; but not Don Pasquale. Without restricting himself to any one speciality, his major occupation was smuggling. In 1949, the police, weary of never having anything against him that warranted more than a six-months' sentence, finally handed him his *foglio di via*, a little paper that provides the bearer with free transit to his native village, and the obligation not to leave it again.

Fortunately, Don Pasquale had some savings, with which he was able to buy a house and set himself up comfortably. For a man of fifty-four, that might seem a fairly pleasant end to his career, but Don Pasquale missed Naples. He missed the alleys where, under lines of washing stretched from side to side like banners, he used to pass slowly by, always accompanied by several henchmen, on the watch for those who dared omit to salute him. Sometimes, with a casual air, he would pick out an apricot or a crisp pastry from a basket, whereupon the delighted shopkeeper would sing his praises or ask kindly after his daughter.

Positano was not so far from Naples, but . . . Well, it wasn't the same thing. After Leicester Square, who can settle down contentedly in Little Puddleton? So, up and down the stairways of Positano, went the melancholy Don Pasquale, with his leonine head, his Bourbon nose, and, round his eyes, the huge dark circles of a retired man about town.

Obviously, for a man of his capacity, a hairdresser son-in-law, an unassuming, honest Positano son-in-law was not at all the thing. However, Don Pasquale had always had a sweet tooth, so he speedily and appreciatively dispatched the cassata—all but a rather small bit that he left, being a good family man, for his wife and daughter.

That out of the way, he very courteously showed Gennariello the door. There had been no question, not for a second, of Nunziatina.

For a fortnight Gennariello brooded over his defeat. Then he put on his black suit again and, armed with a bottle of excellent wine, he went back to Don Pasquale's. This time, fortified by a glass of his own wine, which Don Pasquale had been civil enough to offer him, Gennariello made his request.

Don Pasquale's answer was curt. " My daughter is not for you, Gennariello. Put that idea out of your head. No one but a Neapolitan shall marry her."

When Gennariello told his customers what Don Pasquale had said, it gave rise to strong comments, vehement gestures, and friendly buffets, interspersed with a few maxims of general philosophy. The Marshal of the carabinieri was particularly indignant. He was a native of Positano and Don Pasquale's remark hurt his pride.

" Gennariello," he said, " if I can be of any assistance, count on me."

But that didn't solve the problem. There was no solution. Obviously, there could be no question of marrying Nunziatina without her father's consent. Not only was she a minor, but in the Salerno region, that sort of thing isn't done. There was nothing for it but to be patient and hope that in time Don Pasquale's attitude would change.

And there the matter would have rested if something had not happened that added to Gennariello's passion of love the pang of jealousy. Presumably, after Gennariello's visit, Don Pasquale had done some serious thinking about his daughter's chances of getting settled. At all events, two Sundays running, he had welcomed to his house, with great pomp and circumstance, a friend from Naples, a friend of the good old days. This was a certain Don Giacinto, known as *lo sfregiato*, or Slashface, because of a scar that gave his bony face a touch of grave Spanish dignity. Although not yet thirty-five, this Don Giacinto was already a full-blown guappo, more formal and solemn in his bearing than even Don Pasquale—who, after six years of Positano, was beginning to let himself go a little.

At each visit, Don Giacinto tipped his hat with the end of his swordstick and addressed Nunziatina with: " I salute the rose of this house."

After that, of course, he changed the subject. In matters of the heart, the man of character is content merely to indicate his intentions: he is careful not to stress them. Nevertheless, for all the brevity, his intentions were clear. Don Giacinto came as a suitor, and his suit was well received, by Don Pasquale.

Confronted with this danger, and a tearful Nunziatina, Gennariello woke up. The time for talk and lamentation was over. There was only one thing for it: abduct Nunziatina. Gennariello confided in his friend Pietro, who thought it an excellent plan. And if it is argued that abducting a daughter is a more serious offence than marrying her without her father's consent, that only reveals a complete ignorance of honour and its code. Abduction

doesn't dispense with the father's consent: it simply makes it inevitable. Quite a different thing.

From Nunziatina, Gennariello had learnt one valuable piece of information. After dinner on the evenings of Don Giacinto's visits, Pasquale showed his regard for his guest by accompanying him as far as the main road, where Don Giacinto got on his motor cycle to return to Naples.

When the next Sunday evening came, Gennariello and Pietro took up their position in the stair-alley, a few steps up from Don Pasquale's house. Towards ten o'clock, Don Pasquale and Don Giacinto came out, and started down the stairs. Don Giacinto was elegantly twirling his cane in the moonlight. Gennariello made a furious gesture, and Pietro had to restrain him.

Five seconds later, Gennariello and his friend had slipped into the house. Signora Pasquale opened her mouth to scream, but before any sound came, Pietro adroitly seized her round the waist, bundled her into the adjoining room, and locked her in.

Next Nunziatina had to be mastered. Forewarned of her abduction and entirely agreeable to it, Nunziatina had, nevertheless, as strict ideas as her father on the subject of honour. She was very willing to be abducted, but it must be properly and decently done, by violent means and without her complicity. So, ravished as she was, in every sense of the word, she fought against her ravisher—fought with all her strength, her face wild and feverish.

In the next room, her mother had rushed out onto the balcony and from there, she shrieked her terror.

Meanwhile Nunziatina's resistance was waning, and Gennariello and Pietro succeeded in dragging her off. They had barely crossed the threshold before she collapsed in her ravisher's arms.

"Oh!" she sighed. "It's lovely!"

Gennariello gazed happily down into her radiant face, bathed in moonlight.

"Come on, come on!" said Pietro. Hand in hand, all three ran up the stairway, turned right, dipped under an arch, went down another stair. Nunziatina was in the lead now; her shadow ran ahead of her or behind, along the limed walls. In the distance could still be heard the clamour of Signora Pasquale.

They arrived at Gennariello's. Nunziatina, out of breath, collapsed into the armchair usually reserved for customers, while Pietro took the upright chair, and Gennariello remained standing. They looked at each other, and all three smiled timidly, furtively. Something almost unbelievable had dawned on them: an abduction could be fun.

Then, as expected, there was a clatter of footsteps coming down

the alley. The door was flung open, and the fine bass voice of Don Pasquale rang out: "Scoundrel!"

Just what they had expected. It made little impression. Pietro examined his fingernails. Don Pasquale entered, followed by Don Giacinto. Behind them, the doorway immediately filled with neighbours.

"Scoundrel!" Don Pasquale repeated. "You've abducted my daughter." Which really summed it up very neatly.

"I am ready to make amends," said Gennariello; his answers, too, were in the best tradition.

"Can honour be mended?" Don Pasquale queried sombrely.

"I want to marry her," retorted Gennariello.

Now, that was rushing things a little. Although completely resigned to the inevitable consequences, Don Pasquale still had two or three little remarks to make. "She is dishonoured," he went on gloomily. "My daughter! The light of my eyes . . ."

"It had to be," said Gennariello, a little lost now that he had said the two essential things.

"Wretched girl," said Don Pasquale to his daughter, "could you not resist?"

"There were two of them, Papa," said Nunziatina.

"My daughter!" Pasquale resumed. "I, who brought her up to be the consolation of my old age—I find her in a black-guard's bed."

Gennariello raised his index finger. "Don Pasquale," he said. "Look around."

Don Pasquale swivelled his globular eyes around the room. "I'm looking," he said in a deep voice, "and I see nothing but dishonour and degradation, mud and mire."

"There is no bed," Gennariello went on. "I did not take Nunziatina to my room. I took her to my hairdressing salon. And Pietro hasn't left us alone for a moment."

"Shall I ever dare raise my head again?" said Don Pasquale, who hadn't been listening.

"Your daughter, Don Pasquale—I haven't touched her."

"You have dishonoured my daughter, and you still live. Am I, then, no longer a man?" Pasquale intoned, hand on heart.

"Saving your presence," said the cold voice of Don Giacinto. Don Pasquale turned towards him; in an affair of this sort, the advice of a guappo like Don Giacinto was not to be scorned.

"If, before witnesses—" and Don Giacinto waved the tip of his cane contemptuously at Pietro and the neighbours—"this fellow affirms that he has not touched your daughter, no damage has been done, Don Pasquale, and a man of honour can very well marry her still."

Nunziatina shot up in her chair. That was a proposal, a clear, precise proposal. And when a guappo goes so far as to make a proposal, it means that, for him, the question has already been settled. A murmur rose from the doorway.

Don Pasquale's face brightened. "That's quite true!" He turned to address the throng of neighbours at the door. "You heard him. He swore he hadn't touched my daughter."

The neighbours looked at each other in dismay. On the subject of Nunziatina, public opinion was on Gennariello's side but, after all, he had dropped the brick himself. He had said that which should not have been said. And truth is truth.

The oldest member of the crowd indicated that he had heard.

"Well, now," said Don Pasquale to his daughter, "home you go." He grasped her elbow. Nunziatina raised her arm, and Gennariello took a step towards her.

Don Giacinto planted himself in front of him, erect, cold-eyed. "Shall I mark him?" he asked Don Pasquale, and his hand on the pommel of his swordstick left no doubt as to what he meant. Terrified, Gennariello recoiled, his hand to his cheek.

"No, no," said Don Pasquale. "Let it be." Life in the provinces had decidedly softened Don Pasquale.

A quarter of an hour later, order had been restored to Positano. The neighbours had gone home. In the hairdressing salon, Gennariello and Pietro, one sitting, the other on his feet, gazed at each other, overwhelmed. Meanwhile, in her room, Nunziatina sat on the bed, crying softly, as her mother, her vast bosom still racked with an occasional sob but her face radiating happiness, made coffee for her two heroes.

"Don Giacinto," said Don Pasquale, "you have done me the honour of asking for my daughter's hand."

"Don Pasquale, the honour is mine," replied Don Giacinto courteously, tipping his hat.

At that moment the door opened, and in came the Marshal of the carabinieri. "Marshal!" Don Pasquale greeted him effusively. "What a pleasant surprise!"

The Marshal placed his kepi on the table, sat down, and accepted the tiny cup of coffee that Signora Pasquale handed him.

"And how's your good lady?" Pasquale went on. "There's a fine woman, Marshal! And the family, they're well?"

"Fine," said the Marshal. "Oh, on the subject of children, I hear your daughter was abducted?"

"Yes," said Pasquale, "by that little blackguard Gennariello."

"I'm going to arrest him," said the Marshal. "Abduction, with violence—that's a serious offence."

" You're right," said Don Pasquale, but he cast an uneasy glance towards Don Giacinto. Say what you like, but having the law on his side . . . it was strange.

" Yes, I'll arrest him," sighed the Marshal. " On your charge."

" Charge? " The word got Don Pasquale on a ticklish spot. " I make no charge."

" Pardon me," the Marshal intervened, " if I arrest him it's entirely on your charge. *I* wasn't present at this abduction."

" But everyone saw it! "

" Everyone saw that your daughter was at Gennariello's, yes. But who says she had been taken by force?"

" I do. I say so, Marshal—"

" Well, then, you are charging Gennariello . . ."

Don Pasquale stole another glance at Don Giacinto, but this time it was loaded with perplexity. How could he, Don Pasquale, make a charge against someone? Don Pasquale the guappo? A guappo dispenses his own justice: in no case does he run to the police. And, above all, not in front of Don Giacinto, sitting there as severe as conscience. He would probably spread it all round Naples . . . No, it wasn't possible.

" Marshal," said Don Pasquale at last, " I make no charge."

" But your daughter *was* found with Gennariello tonight? "

" Yes."

" So she went of her own accord? "

" My daughter! " Don Pasquale bellowed.

" If you tell me she didn't go of her own accord, that means you are making a charge against Gennariello."

There was a breath of Corneille about the scene. There stood Don Pasquale, trapped between his own honour and his daughter's; his own prevented him from making a charge against Gennariello, hers forbade him to admit that she had gone to a man at dead of night. Don Pasquale didn't hesitate long. A daughter's honour can be repaired, a guappo's never.

" My daughter went to Gennariello's of her own accord," he brought the words out painfully.

Don Giacinto moved his eyelids approvingly.

The Marshal rose, picked up his kepi. " So I'm not to arrest Gennariello? "

" No," said Pasquale.

" Very well," said the Marshal. At the door he turned back. " You know, Don Pasquale, I wouldn't have thought it of your daughter. At dead of night . . . with an unmarried man . . ."

" At dead of night! " Don Pasquale roared. " For less than ten minutes."

The Marshal leered. " One can do a lot in ten minutes, Don

Pasquale. And, anyway, if you hadn't run after her, how long would she have stayed? Can you tell me that?"

"Gennariello gave me his word—"

"Ah . . ." The Marshal's leer turned to cynical amusement. "If you take Gennariello's word for it, that's another matter. You find your daughter with a man, at dead of night. They tell you nothing has happened—and you believe it! Tut, tut, Don Pasquale, aren't you being a little naïf?"

Naïf? It took Don Pasquale's breath away.

"What do you expect me to do?" the Marshal continued. "If people ask me why I don't arrest Gennariello, I shall be obliged to tell them one doesn't arrest a boy because a girl, quite freely, pays him a little visit."

"Don Giacinto is going to marry her," Pasquale cut him short.

"*Don Giacinto?*" The Marshal put up a wonderful show of astonishment. "Well! I never knew that in Naples men of honour married girls who were found at all hours of the night with another man . . ." Don Pasquale looked haggard. His eyes passed slowly from the Marshal to Don Giacinto.

"Well, Gennariello shall marry her, then," he said, with force.

"You'll have to see if he still wants to," said the Marshal.

"What! If he still wants to!"

"Well, Don Pasquale, a girl who's been compromised . . ."

"I know how to make him want to!" Pasquale yelled.

The wedding took place the following Thursday. It was a most attractive ceremony, and Nunziatina looked charming in her white veil. The guests were a little mixed: friends of Don Pasquale, Gennariello's friends, the Marshal, a delegation of guappi from Naples. But they all got along very well together, and after the wedding breakfast, Don Giacinto sang *Maruzella*. He had a most agreeable voice. You would never have thought, from his haughty face, that he had it in him.

Translated by J. E. Malcolm

★ ★ ★

COMPETITION RESULT

What is an Argosy story, we had asked, and readers seemed to agree that stories in Argosy have the trick of making you believe in them even if they are flat impossible. We're dividing the prize: a guinea to Mr. K. S. Pitcaithly of Perth, who expects the unexpected and likes what he gets; half a guinea apiece to Mr. M. F. Marais, Maida Vale—"Each story could happen—even to me"—and Gerald Findler, Carlisle.

I LOVE YOU BRONWEN

The lamps of jealousy are fire and flames

BY HUGH MICHAEL HOGAN

IN all the wide valley was no man more respected than Mr. Gruffydd: deacon, preacher, and fine bass voice. And in all the valley was none better loved than Davy Morgan, his lodger and friend.

Ianto Gruffydd was big and blue-chinned and stern. His body was heavy and thick, and shaped like a barrel. Davy was just the opposite. Slight and fair he was, with a creamy skin that easily freckled in the sun, and a smile like a baby's. He had a fine tenor voice.

Between the two of them, Bronwen Gruffydd, Ianto's wife, was counted the most fortunate woman in all the valley. Had it been anybody else, there might well have been talk. But not with Bronwen. Beautiful she was, for sure, but modest and devout. Never missed chapel. And played the harp like an angel. Besides, her man was Mr. Gruffydd, the preacher. And Davy Morgan was the heart and soul of goodness, loved by all.

Well matched they were.

" Glorious is the voice of man," Ianto Gruffydd was given to saying, " and sweet is the music of the harp." And Bronwen would play, and he and Davy would sing; and many a night, when it was fine enough for them to open the windows, the street would be half full of people listening to them.

They worked together at the pit, as deputies. When the shift was over, together they would swing down the hill, their faces black with coal, the red of their lips and gums showing like newly opened wounds as they sang their way down home. Songs and part-songs, cantatas and lullabies. And the women would leave their kitchens to come out to the gate.

" Now, Mr. Gruffydd, then."

" Now then, my Davy bach."

" What are you singing, now? "

" Ah, there is beautiful."

In the winter, they followed football. A trip over to a neighbouring valley for a local game, or up to town for a big one. Once or twice, even to London for an International.

In the summer, fishing. And all the time, winter and summer alike, music.

The Christmas before it all happened, they bought a tape recorder between them, just for the novelty of it. They would get Bronwen to set it going with the radio, when there was a programme they wanted to hear and they were out at work. Or they would put it on while they talked over the dinner table, then play it back afterwards, and laugh at themselves. Once they made a recording of Bronwen as she sang in her bath, and Ianto made her blush when he threatened to let the neighbours hear it. But he never did, of course. Such a thing, with Ianto, would have been unthinkable, indeed.

And then, suddenly, the machine became important. It was just after Ianto had preached a sermon in the chapel. A great sermon it was, too, about the raising of the widow's son from the dead. Indeed, a most powerful sermon.

Afterwards, Mrs. Thomas the Shop said it was a pity that her sister, who was bedridden, could not have heard it. It might have cheered her up, given her fresh heart. And so Ianto preached the sermon all over again, into the tape recorder, and lent the machine to Mrs. Thomas. And then to old Mr. Possart, St. Bride's, and to others who could not get to chapel.

After that, whenever he preached, he would have the microphone hidden inside the pulpit, with a wire running right to the back of the chapel, where Davy sat with the machine. They recorded the choir, Davy and he, in which they both sang, and the choirs of other valleys, too, to compare the others' singing with their own. And as spring came shyly into the valley they went out to put on tape the songs of the birds.

Happy and content they were, for all to see. Until it happened.

The day it happened, Bronwen was baking bread when Mrs. Next Door called out to her over the wall, " Bronwen, your man is coming home along the street."

She ran outside at once, wiping her doughy fingers as she ran. " Ianto? God help us, what can be wrong? "

At the gate she paused, shading her eyes against the sun. Ianto was coming towards her.

He was walking slowly, and in his wake, the heads of other women showed over backyard gates. There was no sound in all the street except for Ianto's footsteps. Behind him, at the head of the valley, the wheels of the pit were still.

She ran towards him. " Ianto, Ianto, what is it? " Then she said, " It's Davy."

Ianto held her gently. Some of the coal dust from his clothes stained her white apron, and the place where his hand touched her arm was streaked with grime. He held her, and the dank, earthy smell of the pit was still on his body. Slowly, he nodded his head. " Yes, Bronwen. Davy."

" Is he—dead? "

" He is dead, Bronwen." The colour drained from her face. " Let me take you inside, bach," said Ianto. " Do not weep, now."

Slowly, he led her inside. Nobody followed them. Her body was shaking, but she did not cry. The bread that she had left in front of the fire had risen, and dumbly, unthinkingly, she kneaded it again. In a far-away voice she asked him, " How did it happen, Ianto? "

" What does it matter, Bronwen, little one? Leave it, now."

She knelt beside the bread dish, and looked into the fire. Without turning, she said, " Tell me."

He looked at her back. " It was a fall of stone, then. We went to inspect a place. The roof had been giving trouble. We got in by there and had a look at it, and saw what was the danger. I said to Davy to leave it, and we'd fix it later. He wouldn't listen, see. He kept on tapping at the roof with his pick after I walked away from it. And then the roof came in. I heard it go and I turned back, but I was too late. Too late."

" Davy." Her voice was a whisper.

" They are getting him out now, Bronwen. They will bring him home later. Soon as they can, likely."

She lowered her head and wept then, the breath jerking out from her body in jagged, heartwracking sobs.

" There is sorry I am, Bronwen." He turned away and walked over to stand in the doorway, his body framed against the light. " There is sorry I am. Weep you, now. Weep and be done with it."

That evening, as the sun went down behind the mountain, the first cuckoo was heard singing in the valley.

They didn't bring Davy home that night. He came later. Much later. Just before the funeral. They would not let Bronwen see him.

Ianto did not preach the last oration for his friend. He said he could not, and the people understood him. Instead, Gwil Owen preached it, and afterwards they carried Davy up the mountain. Every soul in the valley was there at the graveside. The choir sang—those of them who were able—as they lowered

him to earth, and the sun shone bright, and light, cool airs ruffled the daffodils, and carried the echoes of the music away down the valley.

For a long time afterwards Bronwen did not speak. She sat for long periods, staring into the fire, starting when Ianto entered the room. When he sat beside her she would not look at him, and always she went to bed early, pretending to be asleep when he came up.

And then, one evening about a fortnight after the funeral, she spoke. She spoke, but first she sobbed; quietly, to begin with, and then openly, brokenly, terribly.

Ianto got up from his chair, and went to touch her.

" Get your hands off me! " she screamed. " Don't touch me, you murderer, you murderer, you! "

He drew his hand away, and stared down at her.

" You killed him. I know you killed Davy."

For some time he just watched her, then he took her face into his hands and dried her tears. He sat down beside her, on the high fender, and faced her squarely.

" Yes, Bronwen, I killed him. I found out about you, see."

Her eyes were full of pain.

" I found out about you, Bronwen. The night I went in with the night shift, I found out. That time there was the trouble with the pump. I found out then."

" Murderer! "

" I did not murder Davy, Bronwen. I *slew* him. ' I am the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' I am a just man. I waited until opportunity came, and the Lord sent it quickly."

" Merciful God! " she sobbed.

" We had to go to inspect a seam, Bronwen, like I said. Where the roof was dangerous. It was dark in by there, and low, and we had to kneel down. When we were close, I told him that I knew about you. About him and you. Man that he was, he didn't deny it, mind."

She lowered her head, but he lifted it up again.

" I slew him, Bronwen. I took him by the neck and I shook him. I took the handle of the pick I always carry in by there, and I broke his skull with it. And then I threw him down. I bent over him, then. Dead, he was. I went back to the end of the tunnel and I opened wide the crack that was in the roof already, and I pulled it in on him. The roof came down. And I came away, then. I had done justice."

She began to shake, to lose control, to scream.

" You'll hang. You'll hang. You'll hang."

He pulled her closer, hit her sharply, crisply, across the cheek. "Be quiet, woman. I will not hang. I have set my house in order and that is the end of the matter. There will be no more. Nothing more. We will go on living as we did, before Davy came into the valley. There will be no scandal."

Her mouth fell open.

"I told you, Bronwen, that I had found out about you and Davy. I did not tell you how I came to know. Tell you I will, though, and see if you do not agree with me.

"That night, when I had to go in about the pump, I played a little joke on you. Always I have said that you snored, and always have you denied it. So I set out to show you, see. I put the microphone under our bed, Bronwen, with the time switch set for half-eleven. You'd be in bed before that, I thought, and soon you would be snoring. I was going to convince you, see, that was all.

"In the morning, you went out. Remember? To shop. Davy was at work. I brought the machine out from the cupboard, and played over the tape. All there, it was. All there. Everything. The moaning and the sighing, Bronwen. The breathing. Oh, the breathing, Bronwen. All there, it was, from the moment he opened the door on you and spoke from the canticle of canticles. How beautiful his tongue. 'Behold, thou art fair, my love,' he said; 'behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.' All there on the tape it was, Bronwen, and the scales fell from my eyes."

Her face was frozen like a mask of death. Her eyes were dark with agony.

"So let us have done with Davy. It is finished. You are a woman and I cannot judge you, for I am a man, and your husband. I will forget it, God help me. There will be no law, Bronwen, except our law, and no more evil. And in this matter do not allow yourself to be tempted, for I have given already into the hands of Mr. Rhys at the Bank the recording that you made with Davy. All done up in a little tin it is, and sealed. And instructions given that in the event of my untimely death, or on my order, it is to be played over in the presence of the choir here. Let us have no evil thoughts, therefore. The days of tribulation are past."

Bronwen was silent. No movement came from her. For a long moment he looked at her, then nodded as if satisfied. He got up from the fender, crossed over to the cupboard, and took out the tape recorder, which he placed on the table. From a box, he took out a reel of tape, and put it on the machine, ready to be played.

"Bronwen," he said. She looked up.

"I am going out now. See, here is a copy of the recording I gave to Mr. Rhys. It is the only copy, and it is for you I made it. You may do what you please with it. Play it, or burn it, as you like. I do not want it.

"I am going out now, to choir practice. I will be hungry when I come back. Make me some supper."

He went to the door, took his cap off the nail. When he got the door open, he paused to look back at her.

He stayed there for some time, just watching her; then he said, "*How beautiful art thou, and how comely, my dearest . . . Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death.*" He opened the door. "Jealousy," he said, "jealousy is hard as hell. The lamps thereof are fire and flames."

He looked out towards the stars. Then, turning again, he smiled at her: a soft, child's smile that held in it tenderness.

"I love you, Bronwen," he said, and went out.

★ ★ ★

SOLUTIONS to AT PENCIL POINT on page 47

1. *He invented them.*
2. *Mr. Toad, in Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows.*
3. *The Queen, the King, Laertes, and Hamlet himself.*
4. *Oscar Wilde; Foxhunting.*
5. *At Whitchurch, in Middlesex, where Handel, who was organist there, heard him and composed his famous variations.*
6. *a. 150 yards; b. The sirens on the R.M.S. Queen Elizabeth when keyed to lower bass A can be heard over 10 miles away, detected at 100 miles.*

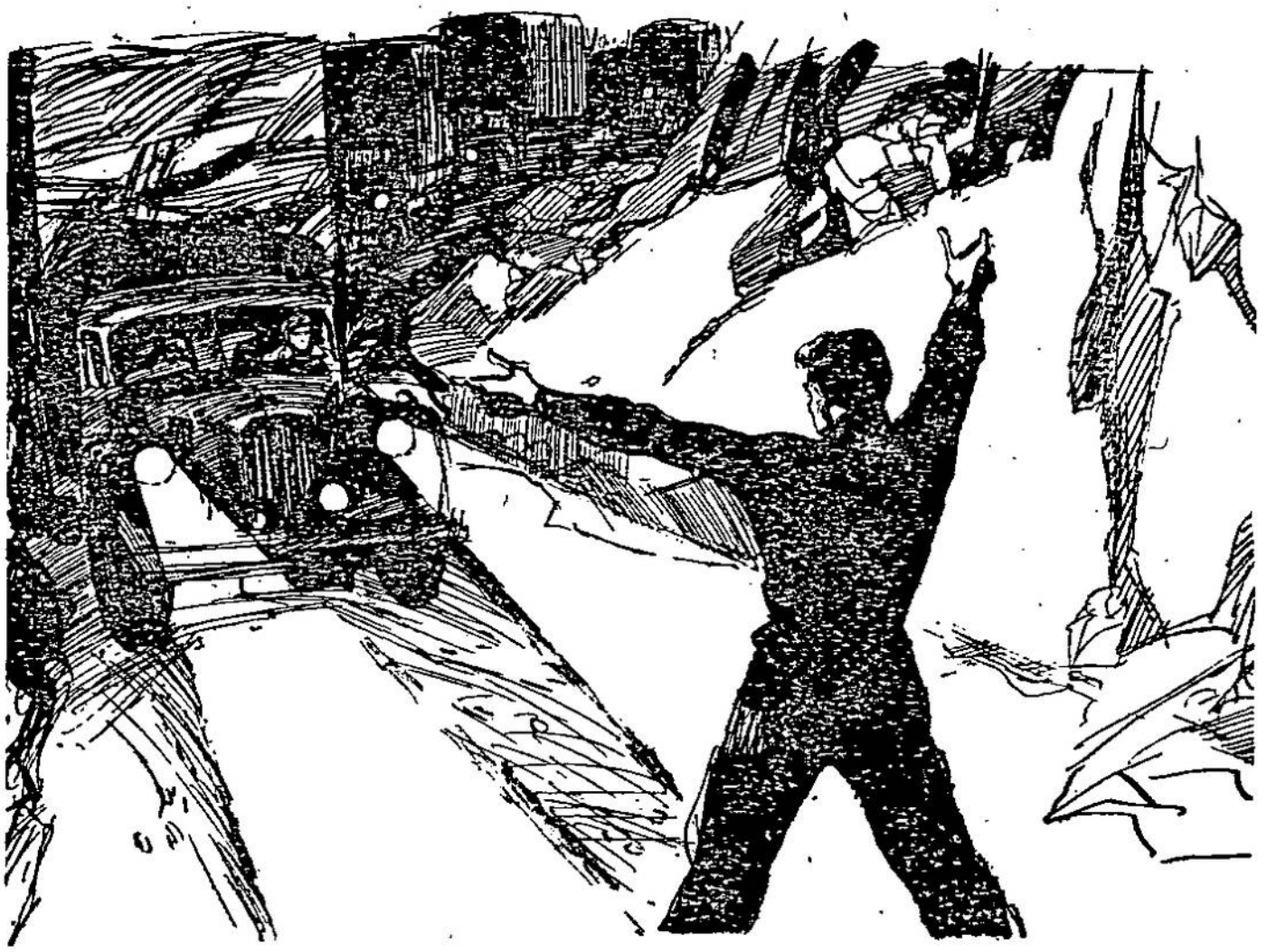
SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 1, *Capitalist.* 6, *Stop.* 10, *Arrow.* 11, *Ploughboy.* 12, *Head a list.* 13, *Extra.* 14, *Punch-drunk.* 16, *Bait.* 18, *Neat.* 20, *Good sailor.* 23, *Hooks.* 24, *Delirious.* 27, *Enamoured.* 28, *White.* 29, *Knot.* 30, *Edward Lear.*

Down. 1, *Coach.* 2, *Pertain.* 3, *Tow-paths.* 4, *Lippi.* 5, *Shortened.* 7, *Tabitha.* 8, *Paymaster.* 9, *Egret.* 14, *Pinchbeck.* 15, *Reordered.* 17, *Harrowed.* 19, *Avocado.* 21, *Lionize.* 22, *Astor.* 25, *Lydia.* 26, *Steer.*

ARGOSY FOR H.M. FORCES

When you have read this copy of ARGOSY, why not pass it on to a member of H.M. Forces?



MANASCO ROAD

BY VICTOR CANNING

When Nick Thorne heard that his partner Domingo Peroni had bought the cargo of the foundered freighter Maria, the deal seemed to promise easy money that would allow Nick and his wife Kate to leave Spain and retire to England. Nick needed to forget the bitter pain of Kate's infidelity with the American diplomat, Ray Asherton.

The only road to where the Maria lay off the Spanish coast ran over land owned by the ruthless Manasco family. "Your partner got the cargo by a dirty trick," Señor Manasco said shortly. "You can sell it to me at cost or it can stay there and rot." Defying him, Nick enlisted the help of young Rigo, son of old Johnny Manchester, who hated lovely, hostile Juana Manasco and her drunken brother Guido. Together Nick and Rigo built a raft and began unloading the cargo. One evening, when Nick was alone, Juana came aboard and told him she loved him. It was a ruse—Guido, meanwhile, was cutting loose the raft. Alerted by the distant throbbing of their motor boat, Nick pursued Guido, seized back boat and raft, and returned victorious. Juana persisted that she wanted to help. Spurning her offer, Nick's answer was to throw her overboard to swim ashore . . .

NICK turned from the rail to find Kate standing behind him.

"Kate," Nick said in surprise. "How did you get back?"

"After I got Domingo's message—the lighters are no good, by the way—I took our boat and rowed back."

"You shouldn't have risked that."

"It was quite safe." She paused. "Things seem to have been happening here."

"Yes, they have . . ."

"Our friend Juana appears to have taken a liking to you. Is that the only way you could get rid of her?"

"Yes." He smiled, going forward and putting his hands on her shoulders and kissing her. "Yes, it was. That girl is strictly from the devil." His voice was abruptly harsh and he saw Kate look quickly at him . . .

It took a few more days for the cargo to begin to pile up on the beach. The first day five loads, and the second, six. There was nothing above water in the forward hold now. Rigo and Nick took turns in going under carrying a rope with a hook to make a quick fastening. Then up would come, as they both bent to the double-handled winch, dripping with water and filth, a narrow crate full of windows. If the rope or the crate broke and the load crashed back, their language was enough to sear the hairs off Kate's head. At night she boiled gallons of water for them in the galley copper, and they stood on deck stark naked—warning her she came out at her own risk—and scrubbed each other down, shouting and laughing.

And all this, she thought, as though they were getting somewhere. But what would happen when all the stuff was piled on the beach? There weren't many days left in which to meet the contract date for delivery in Palma. What good would the stuff be sitting on the beach when it should be on the new airfield site?

The third evening after they had begun to ferry the cargo ashore, Rigo was to go off for the night to help his father. In the middle of that afternoon Kate took the *Maria* skiff and rowed ashore with the water-cans. There were two large piles of cargo on the beach now. By the evening, she knew, they hoped to have cleared the forward hold.

As she waited for the last water-can to fill, Juana came out of the villa gate and walked across, side-stepping down the broken sandy slope, pushing her way through the feathery bamboo growths.

"I was in Puerto this morning for our mail. I collected these for you." She held out three letters to Kate.

"Thank you." Kate shuffled the letters in her hands, looking at the inscriptions. The top one was from her daughter, Julia, the stamp stuck on a little askew; and the one below was from Kate's father. The last one was postmarked Madrid. She slipped the three letters into the pocket of her jumper.

Juana said pleasantly, "Other people's letters are always fascinating."

"I suppose so." Kate watched the water splashing into the can until it was full. Then she picked it up, turning away down the beach. She heard Juana move behind her. Looking over her shoulder she saw that she had picked up the other can and was carrying it. Kate ignored her, dropping her can into the bows of the skiff. Juana came up close to her and lifted the other can in. She put a hand on the bows of the skiff and said, "Three letters to read." She was smiling, the breeze from the water gently ruffling the skirts of her white linen dress.

"Which will you read first?" Juana asked. "The one from Madrid?" Kate couldn't miss the significance in her voice . . .

Back on the *Maria* Kate went into the cabin. Nick and Rigo were working in the hold. She pulled out the three letters. She turned over the one from Madrid. Ray Asherton's name was written on the back, following American custom. She suspected the letter had been opened.

She went into the cabin to read the letter from Ray. It was a long letter and he said most of the things she had known he would say . . . a man not wanting to shut the door on the past. She tore the letter up and, going to the galley, dropped it on the stove fire.

She turned away from the blaze, and, beginning to wipe a plate she felt a sudden sense of frustration come over her. She looked at the plate in her hand and hated it from the depths of the impatience in her . . . from the longing in her to be wise-headed, calm, and capable of handling this sensibly. She threw the plate against the iron front of the stove and breathed a deep sigh of relief. That, she knew, was what Nick was waiting for a chance to do; to smash something, to explode in a sudden outburst of fury. Well, the sooner he did it the better. Smash Manasco . . . do something . . . but do it quickly.

As she gathered up the broken pieces she smiled to herself. When a man smashed something he walked away and left it, but a woman found herself down on her knees picking up the pieces.

Behind her, Nick's voice said, "Breaking things up?" He sounded genial, composed, and smiled at her, a big, dirty, happy-looking man, extending a great warmth of feeling to her as he came across and helped her pick up the pieces.

"It slipped from my hand."

"Naturally . . ." He tickled the back of her neck and she couldn't tell whether he had seen her smash the plate or whether he believed her. One thing was clear: there was no irritation or bad temper in him.

He stood up, scratching at his ruffled hair. "I tell you what, there are one or two things we need from Johnny Manchester's garage; chiefly carbide for the deck lamps. I'll write you out a list and you can take the motor boat round for the stuff. A break from this place will do you good."

"You really want this stuff? Not just sending me off because you think I need . . . Oh, well you know what I mean."

"No. We really need it. I wish I could come with you. We could have had lunch at the Margarita and split a bottle of wine. I wouldn't mind getting my elbow on a bar again. However . . ." His hand came out and teased at her ear. "I'll get the boat ready."

The wind had risen and the sea was lumpy and broken as Kate put out in the motor boat. The fringe of breakers along the cliffs made a booming sound that she could hear out here. The moment she turned the point and came into the bay the sea was calmer, running evenly, and the wind, blocked by the headland, lost its shrill note. At the end of the run, she brought the motor boat into harbour, and dropped anchor in the boat basin. A boy rowed her ashore and she went along to Johnny Manchester's garage. He promised to collect the stuff and take it out to the boat for her. She spent the next hour shopping and finally finished up at the Hotel Margarita for lunch.

She enjoyed her lunch—a Spanish omelette, then cold lobster and salad, with half a bottle of white wine. She took a long time over her coffee and then, enjoying the luxury about her, after the *Maria*, she went upstairs and had a leisurely hot bath. Unhurried, relaxed, talking to herself a little, she lay there, her ego expanding like a Japanese paper flower dropped into water.

She came down into the tiled hallway, feeling refreshed and with a pleased self-confidence. It was good to get away for a while and see things settle back into their right perspective. She looked around at the brightly polished furniture, the coloured Majorcan plates on the walls. At the bottom of the stairs the proprietor came out from behind his desk, smiling, and said, "You are wanted on the telephone, Señora Thorne."

She was turning to go to the telephone when a voice from the doorway into the dining-room said, "Kate."

She half turned back. Standing in the doorway was Ray Asherton.

There was a sudden lash of rain against the long windows and somewhere at the back of the hotel a door banged sharply in the wind. She stood there, conscious of a voice crying protestingly inside her, *Oh no! Oh no!*

"Kate," he said again, and began to come forward with an uncertain, anxious smile on his face.

The proprietor said, "Señora Thorne. The telephone. It is your husband wishing to speak to you." She turned to the telephone, picked it up, and heard Nick's voice come to her faintly as though he were a hundred miles away.

It wasn't until he and Rigo broke off for lunch that Nick realized the change in the weather. The wind had risen and there was a new sound in the bay, the long, whistling hiss of rollers running in from the north-west.

Nick said to Rigo, "I'm thinking of Señora Thorne. She'll have got round all right. But I wouldn't want her to come back in this."

They worked for an hour after lunch, but the anxiety was growing in him. There was only one way to stop her. He would have to ask Manasco for the use of his telephone—and risk a refusal. It was not something he relished doing, but for Kate it had to be done.

He climbed out of the hold and called to Rigo at the winch, " I'm going to make sure she doesn't try to come back."

Rigo nodded, and then flipping a brown arm towards the sky shouted, " It shows now. There is more to come."

Nick took the skiff ashore, and climbed up to the villa. He pulled the bell at the gate and waited. To his surprise it was Manasco himself who came to the gate. He had a thick topcoat drawn around him, and a beret pulled tight down over his head. He looked like some old Tibetan monk, his brown face a lined mask, the skin shining from the rain which hissed down before the wind.

He opened the gate and, cocking his head a little, said, " Señor? "

Nick came bluntly to the point. " My wife took the motor boat round to Puerto before lunch. I don't want her to try to come back in this. I'd be glad if I could use your telephone to call the Margarita. They'll find her and stop her."

Manasco's blue eyes blinked behind his glasses. Then he smiled and said, " Of course. I will show you where it is." He stood aside and with a little wave of his hand beckoned Nick into the garden. " I never expected you to ask any favours of me—but we never know, do we? " He began to move towards the house. Over his shoulder he said, " You've nearly cleared the cargo? "

" Yes. It'll all be ashore in two or three days."

" And what happens then? "

Nick smiled. " You don't expect me to answer that."

" There isn't an answer. The telephone is down here." He led the way through the hall and without looking at Nick he went on talking. " But you still hope that some miracle will get your stuff to Palma on time? It won't, of course. I can tell you that." He unhooked the receiver from the wall. " Hullo. I want the Hotel Margarita." His attention came back from the telephone to Nick and he smiled. " I'm used to winning, Señor Thorne. The need for it is like a drug."

A voice spoke distantly, reedy in the telephone. Manasco handed the instrument to Nick. " Here is the hotel."

As Nick took the instrument the old man walked past him and down a few steps. A door opened and before it shut he had a glimpse of the long greensward of a billiard table.

Nick explained quickly to Kate, but her opposition to his plan made it difficult for him to keep the exasperation from his voice. Why did she have to be so awkward?

" But, Nick, I don't want to. I want to come back—"

" Look, Kate," he cut in on her, " I'm telling you what to do. You spend the night at the Margarita. The bad weather will be gone tomorrow. Hell, I should have thought you'd welcome a

night in comfort at the hotel. You deserve a break, anyway."

He listened to her voice, thin and distant, and his foot tapped irritably on the tiled floor. What on earth had got into her?

"Listen, Kate," he interrupted her sharply. "You stay the night. Is that clear? All right then. No more argument."

"But, Nick—"

"Good-bye, Kate. See you tomorrow."

When he was almost at the door he paused. He had nearly forgotten to thank Manasco for his courtesy. He began to turn back when a door to his left opened and Juana came through into the hall. She stopped, a look of surprise on her face.

He said, "I don't want to disturb your uncle. Would you thank him for letting me have the use of your telephone?"

She walked down the hall ahead of him. With her fingers on the door handle she turned, facing him, her face very close to his. "Nick . . ."

He frowned at the use of his name.

"Don't look so stern. I only want to be sure that you understand what happened to me that night when Guido took the raft."

"Don't let's go into that."

"But I want to. I have to. One moment I was against you and the next I was for you. You know—" Juana cocked her head a little sideways, "—I never thought it would be like this. Falling in love. It embarrasses you, but I don't care. I've got to say it. I don't care who knows it. It's a wonderful feeling."

Nick smiled. "You're young. You'll get used to it. This conversation has gone far enough. Open the door like a good girl and let me go. I've got work to do." She laughed then and before he could move put her arms around his neck and kissed him quickly. She didn't resist when he took her arms and gently put her away from him. He reached past her and opened the door.

He looked back once as he went across the courtyard. She was standing under the balcony and the wind was dragging at her skirts, shaping her thighs under the thin silk. She waved. He deliberately did not wave back.

He went down across the beach and pushed the skiff out. It was a hard pull back to the *Maria* against the wind. He made an angry face, spat over the side, and pulled harder . . .

They worked right through that evening until about nine o'clock. The wind had risen higher and the whole bay was now soughing and hissing with its noise and that of the smash and seething slide of breakers. The overhead acetylene lights swung and dipped on their cables, fizzing and spluttering, and their movement cut the deck with sharp, dancing indigo shadows. The timber-baulk raft alongside heaved and strained as the waves rolled across it. Now and then came squalls of wind filled with the sharp lash of rain.

There was an excitement and wildness in the storm which found a response in both Rigo and Nick. To the challenge of Manasco in their path was added the storm, and they worked late.

Manhandling the smaller cases and using the hoist for the

larger ones, they cleared the after hold to well below water level. The stuff they took out they stacked on deck on the port side ready to off-load to the raft.

It was cold, and they kept a bottle of brandy by the winch. Hard work, brandy, and a wild night. If a man had trouble on his mind, thought Nick, these would lift it. Laughing, singing, and swearing with Rigo, he felt a sense of rough happiness in himself. It was good to have a fight on his hands. He had his teeth into this Manasco situation and he wasn't going to let go.

When they knocked off, they sluiced down outside the galley and then had a scratch meal, washed down with brandy and water. Coming on deck afterwards to douse the acetylene lights, Nick glanced at the four hawsers holding the *Maria* to the far cliff. The bow hawser was under water as the sea channelled through the gap between the *Maria* and the shore. There seemed to be more strain on the two after hawsers. They still dipped and rose with the slight movement on the ship, but every now and again one of them would come up almost to full strain.

He turned to Rigo. " You'd better sleep aboard tonight. Could be we might have some trouble with those hawsers. You can take the other bunk in the cabin."

Lying on their bunks, they talked for a while, but they were both so tired that they were soon asleep.

When Nick woke it was to find the cabin oil lamp still burning. It swung free on a hook near the door. He lay there for a while, coming slowly out of deep sleep. He looked at his wristwatch. It was just before midnight. He was wondering what had wakened him. The wind was higher. He could tell that by the keener note it played on the funnel stays aft of the bridge. He glanced across at Rigo. He was flat on his back, his mouth open.

His eyes came back to the cabin light. The wick was smeeching a little. Then, held by a stupid, half-awake curiosity, he saw the cracks of the door planking behind the lamp slowly slide over out of vertical, stay for a while, and then as slowly come back to an upright position. With the movement he felt himself drawn over against the far side of the bunk. He watched while it happened again. Then it came to him.

He leapt out of the bunk and, pulling on his trousers, shouted to Rigo. Rigo came awake, fuddled, and Nick shook at his shoulder. " Something's wrong. She's heeling. Come on! "

He rushed out of the saloon and down to the deck. A squall of rain slashed into his face, blinding him for a moment. Under his feet the deck heeled again to port. He saved himself against the side of the galley and then tore down the deck to the stern. The deck heeled again and from the darkness of the port side he heard the crash of cases falling.

Rigo came running up to him with a torch in his hand. The beam flickered aft. The light steadied on a deck capstan to which one of the after hawsers had been made fast. The great rope trailed away over the deck and through the rail, hanging loose.

" Hawser's gone! " shouted Nick. He grabbed the torch from Rigo and went to the side, flashing the light down. The hawser hung limply over the side, washing free in the heavy run of seas below. A roaring breaker, only its ghostly spume-white crest visible, raced in from the bay and smashed against the stern of the *Maria*. She lifted and then heeled gently over, steadied and then came back . . . but from the far side came the crash of more cases from the stacks there. From higher up in the stern Rigo shouted, " This one's gone, too, señor."

" Take a look at the cases and see what you can do there! " Nick turned and ran forward. With the torch he checked the two forward hawsers. They were all right. But, flicking the light out along them, he could see they were well up over the broken water now. If much more strain was put on them they would go.

He ran back to Rigo, the torchlight picking a path for him. Two piles of cases had slipped as the deck heeled and the stuff was all over the place, most of it jammed hard up against the port rail. If the *Maria* heeled much more the rest of the deck cargo would slide against the rail and crash through. There was more than half the after-hold cargo on deck. If they lost that, their profits would be that much smaller. But worse than that, if the *Maria* heeled too much and came off the rocks that held her pivoted somewhere amidships she might go right over.

Rigo came stumbling towards him. Nick grabbed his shoulder and they steadied themselves against another swing of the *Maria*. " Rigo "— he had to shout to be heard above the wind—" we've got to get new stern hawsers out to stop this heeling or she'll go over." As he spoke he began to move around the after hold to the starboard side. Down below in the darkness of the hold he could hear the swirl and slap of water.

" There's enough slack round the capstans on deck to reach the cliff, no matter where they're broken."

They got hold of the first broken hawser and began to haul it aboard. It came in easily with the two of them on it. Twenty yards of heavy, water-sodden rope. With the slack that had always been on deck beyond the capstan they had about a hundred yards of hawser. The gap between the *Maria* and the shore was no more than fifty yards. The second hawser had parted nearer the shore and they had about thirty yards of it as well as the slack on deck.

As they finished hauling it in, Nick said, " I'll row ashore with two light lines. When I'm there you fasten your end of the lines to the broken ends of the hawsers here. But remember—if she starts to go, you jump for it like hell! "

" But, señor, when you haul on these ropes they'll be like lead."

" I'll get them ashore. Every time she heels back to position I can work up the slack. You get the light lines and I'll bring the skiff around to this side and you can drop them to me."

At the moment the *Maria* was only pivoting gently and the two hawsers would hold her, but the danger was that before he

could check the swing the keel would grind and break away the holding rocks and then—well, Manasco would have good news with his breakfast.

Because of the seas they'd drawn the skiff up the gangway a few feet and lashed her. He jerked the lashings free and let her run stern first down the few steps. A wave caught her stern and swung her out and he jumped, landing all over the place and swearing. Before he could get the oars out he was swept beachwards almost to the bows of the *Maria*. He pulled round under the cutwater, found calm water for a moment, and then began to work up the other side.

In the narrow channel between ship and shore the sea was going like a mill-race, broken and angry with the scour over the shallow rock bed. His eyes, accustomed to the dark now, watched the black sheer of the *Maria*'s plates on his left, marking his progress against the rust patches. The wind, full on his bows and back, fought against him with the run of the sea. While he crept up, inch by inch, towards the stern, a shout came from the darkness above him. He looked up quickly and saw Rigo's silhouette against the grey sky. A couple of lines came snaking down, weighted with pieces of wood.

He leaned forward, grabbed the lines, and made a couple of quick hitches around the stern thwart, feeling the skiff being swept away as he stopped rowing. For a second or two the thin lines were taut like bow strings. Then, up above, Rigo began to pay them out fast.

Nick grabbed the oars and began to work across the channel current. Rigo would pay out the other ends of the lines and work his way to the stern. Nick could go ashore where he liked and then walk up abreast of the stern with his end of the lines. Even so, the lines were not unlimited, and he crabbed across the dark channel to make the nearest landing he could.

He looked over his shoulder. The shore was only a few yards away, a grey jumble of rocks. The run of the sea smacked against the skiff, sending spray high over him. An angle of rock ran out and he edged in behind it. For an instant, the skiff hung in a mêlée of disturbed water. He unshipped the lines and wound them round his arm. There was a moment of tangle and confusion and the skiff began to slide out. He met the situation with the only solution he could command. He rolled over the side of the skiff and grabbed at the nearest rock.

As he climbed ashore he saw the skiff ride away towards the beach. Well, they could pick her up in the morning. She would drive up onto the sand.

He stood up, sorted the lines out, and then began to work his way over the broken rocks, taking in the slack on the lines as he went. He could feel the tug of the water dragging at them. The throb and vibration along them reminded him of the electric pulse that came into a line when a fish struck.

Somewhere out in the darkness he heard Rigo shout. He

answered, calling back through the night, the wind full in his throat, and a sudden surge of excitement filled him. He took out the torch, which he had shoved into his trouser pocket, and signalled his position to Rigo. Then he dropped down from the spur and began to work along the jumble of rocks. The wind had shifted and was running now free into the mouth of the bay. The sea was swinging in, raising great shouldering slopes of water, hissing happily as they came smashing against the rocks in a frenzy of power, the spray and spume sheeting high.

He ducked under the first of the bow hawsers running above his head to a rock up the cliffside. Raising his hand he could feel the tension on it. The other one, ten yards farther on, went slack as he worked his two light lines under it and then came up, taut and humming for a moment as out in the darkness the *Maria* heeled. He flashed his torch again and saw an answering flicker from the *Maria* and fancied he heard Rigo shouting.

The cliff broke back in a deep gullet full of dark, churning water. He dropped in and went across the few yards, splashing and kicking clumsily like a dog, the slack on the lines coiled in a tangle over one arm. A wave took him and threw him up against a rock and he felt the harsh bite of raw stone against his shoulder.

Twenty yards farther on and he was on a wide, creviced plateau of rock, the sea smacking against its lip and sending spray cascading high into the air. The surface of the plateau sang and chattered with the noise of returning water. Rigo's torch flashed again and Nick saw that he was level with the stern now. He swung his own torch round and examined the ground at the back of the rock platform.

A blunt pinnacle of stone projected from the foot of the cliff. It would make a good anchorage for one hawser. Ten yards to the right of the pinnacle there was another rock outcrop which would take the second hawser. He made the end of his light lines fast around each anchorage and then, holding the pinnacle line, went back across the rock platform to the sea.

Rigo's torch began to move round in a slow circle. He answered and began to haul in on the light line.

It came easily at first, throbbing with the run of the sea over it in the channel. Then he felt it jerk and more weight go on it, and he knew that Rigo had started to pay out the thick hawser attached to the end of the light line. He braced against the pull, dragging the line in hand over hand. It came slowly, the weight growing with each foot he won.

Rigo was right, he thought grimly. It was like lead. But lead that had life; alive and kicking and fiendishly unwilling to give way to him. Sweating and straining, he went back inch by inch. But when he was halfway across the plateau he felt the hawser resist him, then slowly begin to pull away. For a moment he hung on, feeling himself being dragged back towards the plateau edge and he knew that out there in the wild night the *Maria* was heeling over and taking the hawser with it. He stopped fighting

the rope and paid out slack until the hawser stopped moving away from him.

Then, with a desperate energy, he hauled in again, fighting to take up all the slack he could and win a few more feet towards the pinnacle. He got the hawser end to within two yards of it when he felt the seaward pull and knew the *Maria* was swinging over again. He went back with the rope, panting and cursing with frustration.

Three times he went back and forth on the drag of the hawser. The rope had now become a personal, living presence that he hated and fought with a bitter anger. His hands raw from the bite of the wet rope, his muscles cracking as he fought the long drag from the darkness, he suddenly felt the rock pinnacle rough against his back and wondered desperately through the mist of anger in his mind whether he would ever get enough slack to make a turn round it . . .

His strength was going. The rope began to work away from him again and he went with it. Digging his heels into the rock surface, he tripped and fell. Still holding the rope, he felt himself being dragged forward. The lash of a breaking wave sent a slither of water over his head and shoulders, and he choked for air as he fought his way to his knees.

From the darkness to his right he heard a shout. Then there was the wet slap of feet in the water over the rock platform. Someone went by him and he saw the brief whiteness of face and hands. He was on his feet now and as the *Maria* swung back from her heeling he gathered in the hawser once more. This time it came without so much struggle and he saw a dark shape ahead of him, bending to the rope, straining, with him, at its unwillingness.

He came back now with a yard of slack to spare at the pinnacle, but he needed more.

Twice more he followed the rope back on the heel of the *Maria* and then, with three yards of rope to spare at the pinnacle, he threw a quick hitch round the rock. As the *Maria* out there in the gloom and wildness began to heel again, he shouted a warning to the figure on the rope ahead of him.

He went forward quickly, his hands free, and dragged the figure down to the rock, shouting, "Keep flat—if the hawser parts we could be knocked to hell."

He lay there, head screwed upwards, and he saw the stout rope slide away a little and then begin to rise, slack at first and then tightening. It went up, four feet to the level of the pinnacle fastening and then tautened. The water sprayed from the hemp as the strain came on it and he prayed that it would hold against the sway of the *Maria*. If it parted, the whipping ends could sweep across the plateau like steel cables, could cut a man in half . . .

It held. Slowly the strain went off and it slacked back. He jumped to his feet, a cry of triumph in his throat, and reached down. A wet hand found his, and the figure at his feet came up.

Juana's face was close to his. Her hands grasped at his arms, and he saw the shine in her dark eyes and felt the warm breath

from lips close to his cheek. " There's another one! " he shouted above the wind.

He raced to the edge of the plateau, flashed his torch in a circle to Rigo, and began to haul in on the second light line.

They worked shoulder to shoulder, and he knew that without her he could never have done it . . . the hawser would have beaten him, worn him down.

They got the other hawser ashore and this time, because the first hawser was checking most of the heeling, it came without too much difficulty. They got a half turn round the other rock and then, waiting their chance, sweated the rope up more and more and finally secured it. The heeling now was down to no more than an occasional sway that brought the hawsers up tight and made them sing for a moment as the wind broke against them. He knew they would hold. In the morning he and Rigo could go over them together and take up any stretch and slackness.

The wind was still high but the clouds were thinning and it was a little lighter now. He watched the two hawsers rise and hold and dip. He had one arm round Juana's shoulder as she stood close to him. Through the light silk mackintosh which the wind draped and billowed around her he felt her shiver. " I saw your torches flashing . . . I'm glad I came," she said.

" I'd never have done it without you," he said. " Come on, you're cold and wet through . . ."

He turned and, taking her hand, went to the foot of the rough cliff slope and began to climb it. A few yards up there was a little path that led round to the beach. She walked ahead of him, without speaking. A rain squall broke down over them. He saw the broken shine of water on her coat like quicksilver, and somewhere in his mind there was an exultation running like quicksilver, an intoxication arising from the wild night, from his fatigue and the relief of snatching success from the moment of defeat.

They came down on to the beach by the little fisherman's shelter where Rigo normally slept. She stopped and turned to him, her feet thrusting into the soft damp sand, her body braced against the drag of the wind at her coat. She put up her hands towards him and the wind took her coat and swept it out like a great spread of wings behind her and he saw that she was wearing pyjamas under it.

" Nick—" Whatever else she said was lost in a burst of rain that hissed across the beach. To escape it he put his arm around her and pulled her into the little hut. In the darkness the noises of the rain against the bamboo palisade walls of the hut were like the fretting tattoo of hundreds of nervous fingers. He could hear her breathing close to him, the warmth brushing against his neck.

He put his hands up in the darkness and found hers, and with the movement he felt her fingers lock gently into his and then begin to tremble.

" You ought to get back," he said, and his voice was rough above the noisy assault of rain on the hut. " You're cold . . ."

Her hands moved, taking his, and through the pyjama silk he felt her breasts as she pressed his raw palms against them.

" Nick . . ."

Suddenly there was no strength or will in him to break the power of the darkness and her closeness, made closer by the wind and rain-filled night outside. She came to him and there was salt on her lips and the warmth and softness and trembling eagerness of her skin under his hands.

She laughed and kissed him, and there was nothing that had any place in the darkness, no thought, no word, no memory, except the two of them, impatient for each other, tender for each other . . .

He woke once, feeling the weight of her shoulders against his outflung arm. Half asleep, he reached over in the darkness and his hand, touching her skin, moved caressingly over the smooth line of her waist and found the edge of her flung-back pyjama jacket. He pulled it over her gently, feeling her stir and then draw closer to him, her face seeking the angle of his neck and shoulder. Momentarily, the warm, moist pressure of sleeping lips was against his flesh.

Hazily the beginning of thought began to pry into his mind, but sleep and the long, calm ease in his body thrust it away as he half turned and gathered the softness of her to him and drifted away to the adieu of the wind fretting at the loose thatching of the hut roof.

He woke again much later, knowing she was awake and stirring. For a moment through half-open lids he saw her. The hut was still. The wind and rain had gone and a pale pearly light was in the place. Outside, a late moon had risen. She was on her knees beside him, her face lifted towards the roof, smiling, and her hands were cupped under her bare breasts, holding them, her body drawn up by some muscular ecstasy. He saw the dark pool of shadow across her stomach under the bold arch of her ribs.

A hand touched his forehead. He felt her lips move lightly onto his mouth and work across it in faint kisses. Then the lips were gone and he heard the rustle of her raincoat and the crunch of sand under her feet. He began to lift his shoulders from the roll of nets, wanting to call her back. But she was already at the door, framed against the pale night, and he made neither move nor sound to stop her. This must end, he told himself, as it had begun, the whole thing belonged to this night and the wildness of the storm . . .

He watched her in the doorway. She was looking out at the beach, at the moonlit bay and the hills that went shouldering to the sky with a grey, brutal roughness. She turned back, not seeing his open eyes in the gloom of the hut, kissed her fingertips to him, and moved away.

He lay there, the harshness of the nets under his bare shoulders, and he knew there were two things he must hold to beyond all others. This must be something locked away from Kate since at

no point did it touch her or his love for her. And further, and perhaps more important, it would be useless to try to work it out for himself. To ask himself why would lead nowhere. It had happened. But it had sprung from no past, and it must not be allowed any future. It sounded ruthless, shameless, but it had to be that way.

He sat up after a while and groped for his shirt. He found it, a limp, torn rag. He must find the skiff and get back to the *Maria*. He went to the door of the hut and there was the long, bulky shape of the *Maria* motionless on the flat, polished marble of a still sea, and away by the spring the skiff nosing against the sand, waiting . . .

He moved away from the hut and flung down the ripped and useless shirt. It hit the sand at the base of a pile of door frames. Someone moved from the shadow of the piled cargo, looked down at the shirt and then up at him.

It was Kate. She wore an unbuttoned raincoat, her hands deep in the pockets. Her shoulders were hunched a little and a wing of her fair hair curled low over her forehead.

They looked at one another without speaking, and he could read the hard lines of thought and pain on her face. Momentarily it was the face of another Kate, older, sadder, and coldly disturbing.

" Kate—"

She shook her head suddenly, a bitter gesture that stopped his tongue, and he heard her breath drawn in sharply, hungrily, as though she had a desperate need of air. " I saw her come out," she said. " You don't have to say anything." She spoke low, but her voice was vibrant, shaking with suppressed emotions.

He put his hand up, covering his eyes. " The whole thing . . . Kate, it was a madness. It doesn't belong to anything we know."

" Yes, it does! It's part of you, part of us." She turned away, hiding her face from him. " But why talk about it? I did it to you. Now you do it to me—"

" Kate! For God's sake, it wasn't like that! "

" Wasn't it? " She turned back and for the first time the stir of anger was clear in her eyes. " But why should I complain? Is that what you're saying to yourself? "

" I won't let you talk like that." He stepped forward and took her arm fiercely.

Impatiently, she pulled her arm free. " Go away, Nick. Leave me alone."

" Don't be a fool, Kate. I'm staying with you."

" No . . ." It was a sudden cry. " Don't you see . . . only a little while ago that girl walked out of there and everything went upside-down. I don't know what I'm thinking or feeling yet." She began to walk away from him.

He hurried after her. " Where are you going? You can't hang about here all night."

" Don't worry about me. There's nothing here now that can hurt me any more. Let me go."

COMING ATTRACTIONS!

in next month's ARGOSY

★ **H. E. BATES**

at his most brilliant, contributes a vivid, passionate, new short novel

★ **RAY BRADBURY**

with a nice touch of Irish adventure, proves truth is stranger than fiction

★ **RICHARD STERN**

brightens our pages with a rollicking, romantic new farce

★ **CHRISTOPHER LANDON**

weaves a spell of Persian magic, and brings legend intriguingly to life

★ **MICHAEL GILBERT**

another exciting Petrella mystery

For the Best of today's Reading
and the Best in today's Writing

ARGOSY

the Short Story Magazine

"But, Kate, I must know! What are you going to do?"

"I'm going back to Puerto. I want to think and I want to be alone."

"But, Kate, I've got to know . . . about us, I mean."

"So have I, Nick. But I don't know. I can't know yet—"

"That's not fair. When you told me, I gave you an answer."

"An answer!" She swung round, the sound of her words bitter on the night air. "You used words. If that's an answer. But this is the real answer. This, tonight—"

"Kate!"

He reached for her as she moved away, but she avoided him and, without looking back, cried, "Don't follow me! I can't bear it. Just let me alone . . ."

He followed her to the top of the rise overlooking the long valley and watched her move away through the myrtle bushes until she finally reached the road. Then he turned and walked back to the beach.

There was one oar still left in the skiff, and, using the oar over the stern, he ferried himself out to the *Maria*. Rigo was in the saloon, asleep and snoring. Nick mixed himself a brandy-and-water, lit a cigarette, and went out onto the bridge. He leaned on the rail, smoking and drinking. The only thing to do now was to ride it out. Kate would be back in the morning—or if she wasn't he'd go and fetch her.

For two hours he and Rigo worked, offloading stuff from the deck.

The rope tackle which they used to ferry the raft ashore had parted during the night, and when the raft was loaded and ready for its first run to the beach, they rigged a new line and Nick rowed ashore with it to make it fast to the anchorage up on the cliff bluff.

From the beach, he saw Juana come out of the side gate of the villa and walk along the top of the bluff towards him. She raised a hand and waved and he waited for her by a pile of cargo.

She stopped a yard from him, and the sun was bright on her face as she said, "Nick." He knew that look must have been there as she walked unknowingly past Kate last night. That look, a sword-thrust to Kate then, and a sword-thrust to him now.

"Juana."

She said, "Nick," again, as though the word were an echo repeating itself in her mind, and he told himself not to weaken because of the young happiness in her.

He said, "You've got to listen to me carefully, Juana. I don't want to, but I'm going to hurt you. You're going to hate me—"

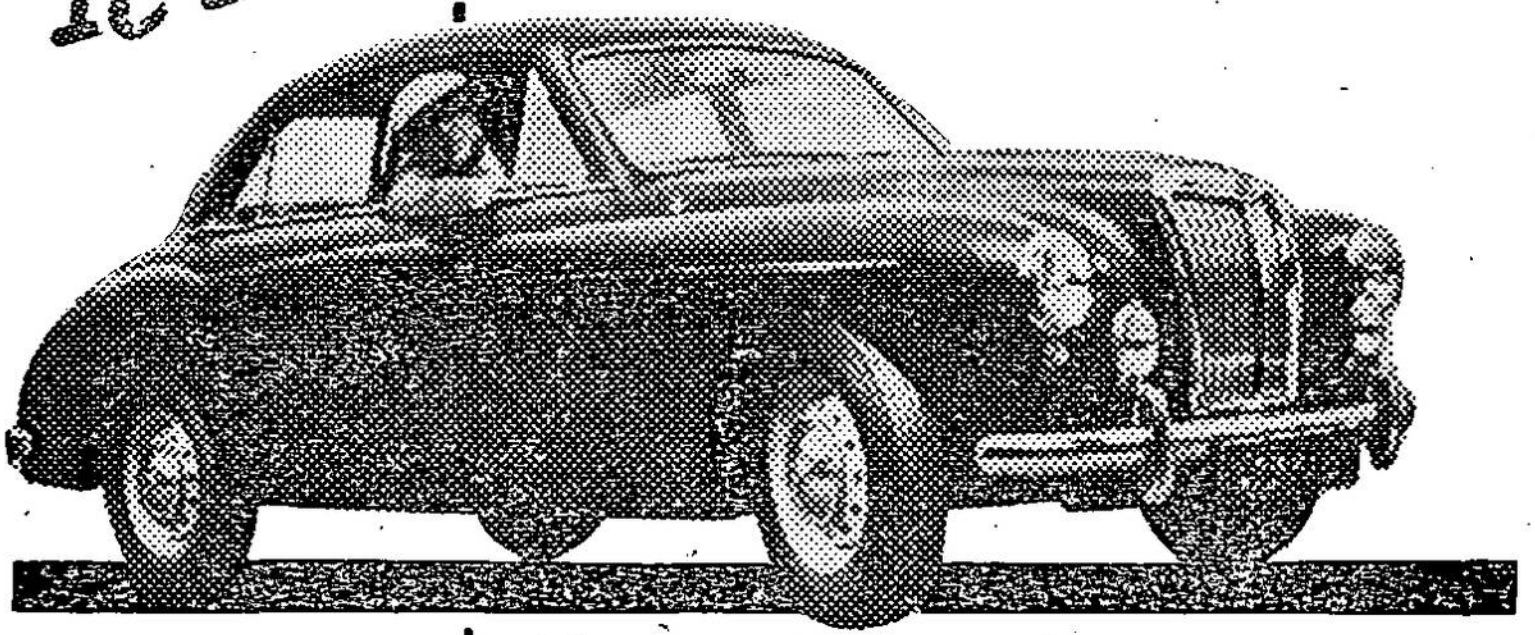
"Nick, I told you I don't want a chance to escape. I've got it all worked out. You think because of this—" her hand swept towards the piled cargo and out towards the *Maria*, "that it's impossible, but it isn't. My uncle won't fight you when he knows about us. He'll help us, be with us."

"Juana, you mustn't talk like that."

"Why not? You don't imagine I don't know how things are

For my kind of motoring -

it must be an M.G.



Features include real leather upholstery; polished walnut veneer facia panel and interior woodwork. Safety glass all-round.

The man who regards his car as something more than a comfortable means of transportation will find much to delight him in the M.G. Magnette. For this is a car of rare character, luxuriously equipped, well-mannered in town traffic and really exciting to drive on the open road. Ask your local M.G. dealer to arrange a trial drive.

MG

Safety fast!

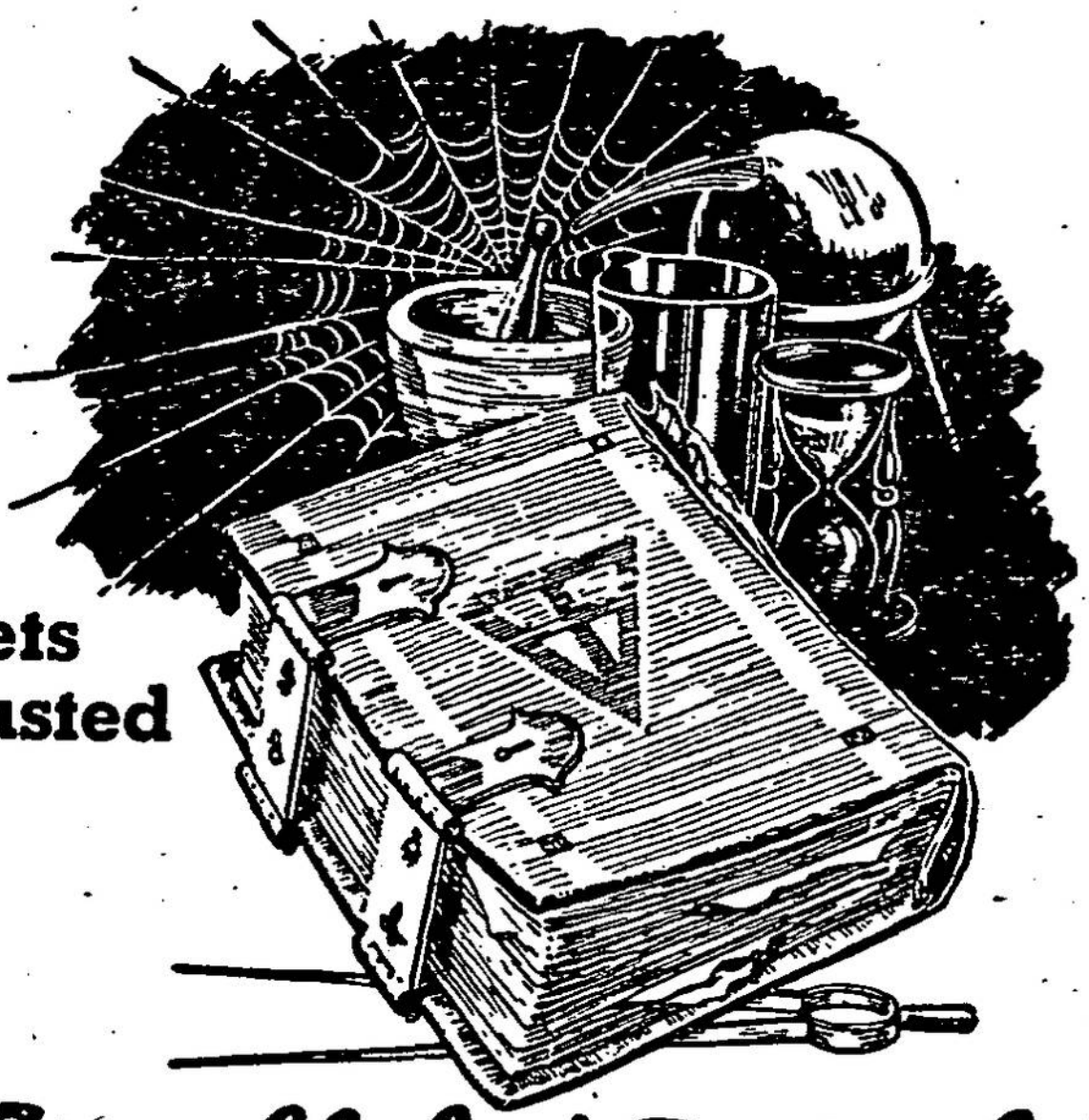
Every new B.M.C car carries a TWELVE MONTHS' WARRANTY. In addition the B.M.C. Used-Car Warranty ensures quality and dependability and permits a fair deal when you sell.

BMC

THE M.G. CAR COMPANY LTD., SALES DIVISION, COWLEY, OXFORD

London Showrooms: Stratton House, 80 Piccadilly, London, W.1

Overseas Business: Nuffield Exports Ltd., Cowley, Oxford, and 41 Piccadilly, W.1



Secrets entrusted to a few

The Unpublished Facts of Life

THERE are some things that cannot be generally told—*things you ought to know.* Great truths are dangerous to some—but factors for *personal power* and *accomplishment* in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of *the hidden processes of man's mind,* and *the mastery of life's problems.* Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

THIS FREE BOOK

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) an age-old brotherhood of learning, have preserved this secret wisdom in their archives for centuries. *They now invite you to share the practical helpfulness of their teachings.* Write today for a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." Within its pages may lie a new life of opportunity for you. Address: Scribe Z.K.X.

---SEND THIS COUPON---

Scribe Z.K.X.
The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
25 Garrick St., London W.C.2, England
Please send me the *free* book, *The Mastery of Life,* which explains how I may learn to use my faculties and powers of mind.

Name.....
Address.....
City.....

The **ROSICRUCIANS** (AMORC)

25 Garrick St.,
London W.C.2, England

between you and your wife? Nick, why do you look like that?" Her voice faded and she frowned.

"What do you know?"

"That you've had trouble . . . that she doesn't love you."

He stepped forward, taking her by the arms and pulling her towards him so that her face looked up into his and she could not escape him.

"Juana, get this straight. What happened last night was the kind of thing that happens to men and women, out of the blue. But you must understand this, it has nothing to do with love. You don't love me—you love the idea of loving me. You're still looking for yourself, but with me it's different. I love Kate and she loves me and there's no real trouble between us . . ."

She pulled away from him. He could see from her frown and the shadow in her eyes and the hardening of her mouth that she was hurt and baffled. Slowly she said, "You don't love me?"

"No."

"You wouldn't marry me?"

"I'm married to Kate."

"And you love her?"

"I said so."

"And you think she loves you?"

"I know she does."

He saw her press her hands together hard as though inside her she was fighting either to hold back or thrust forward some protest.

Then with a scornful laugh she said, "She loves you! Oh Nick, don't keep it up. I know she doesn't. I read the letter Ray Asherton sent her. She must have been glad when you telephoned her to stay the night in Puerto. Guido saw them. Your wife and Asherton having dinner together—"

"What!" He stepped forward, grabbing at her wrist.

"Guido saw them!"

He understood then, and there was a humiliation in him which Juana would never see. That was why Kate had wanted to come back, fought him over the telephone, and finally set out in the night. And she had come back to find him—

He suddenly released Juana's wrist and turned away.

It was gone midday when he reached Puerto. At the Margarita, the proprietor came round his desk with a smile to greet him.

"Is Señora Thorne here?"

"No, señor."

"But she has been?"

"Yes, señor. She came in early this morning. She changed and went out after breakfast."

Nick was silent for a moment. Kate kept a case of spare clothes at the hotel. "You've got a Mr. Asherton staying here?"

"We did have, señor. He left in his car for Palma, very early this morning, about seven." The hotel proprietor was looking curiously at him.

" And you don't know where Señora Thorne has gone? "

" No, señor—she has gone perhaps for a walk."

Nick turned and went out. He knew now—Kate must be in Palma. Her anger with him had carried her that far, lasted through the hours, shown itself permanent . . . and now there was no meaning in anything for him.

She'd come back from Asherton, refused to stay the night near him . . . and he, Nick, had presented her with a fine reward.

He swore to himself and began to go down the steps.

As he did so there was a movement behind an old olive tree near the wall. He saw a flash of pale straw-coloured hair and the swinging edge of a green skirt. Without appearing to move she was abruptly in the open, leaning back against the wall and watching him.

Very slowly he went to her. He stopped, uncertain, when he was close to her. Her face looked tired, but composed. " Kate . . ."

" Hullo, Nick." Her voice was calm, but he knew that this was no moment to go closer, to touch her.

" Kate," he said quietly, " I'm so glad I've found you . . ."

She looked down at her hands, spreading them for a moment against the green of her skirt, and then her eyes came back to him.

When she didn't answer he went on, " When you didn't come back, I wondered . . . Why didn't you come back? "

She looked up sharply. " Because I had a lot of thinking to do. Because I wasn't in the right frame of mind when I left you. I've been sitting out here for the last two hours trying to get it all straight."

" What is there to get straight? It's clear enough, Kate. I made a damned fool of myself. I love you and I want you to forgive me. If you can't . . . well . . ." He made a hopeless gesture with his hands. " I love you. I heard that Asherton was at the hotel. I thought you might have gone off with him. I'd have smashed him to pieces, but only because I wanted you back."

" And if it had happened, and I'd come back, and you'd forgiven me . . . what would happen after that? How long can two people who love one another go on forgiving one another? Not for ever, Nick. And that's what I've been thinking about. That's what I had to be calm enough to see. Now I know that this is the only moment when it can be stopped. That's why I didn't even see Asherton. Do you understand that, Nick? "

" Yes," he said grimly. " I see that. But I love you, Kate I'm not letting anything break us up . . ."

For a moment before she turned her head from him he saw her lips tremble and he heard her say, " I want it to be as it was . . . I can't imagine us not being together . . ."

As she went on speaking, he saw the faint stir of the loose pale hair and was thinking . . . *This is Kate, Kate of all the small and much-loved things.* All the small, real things that must be remembered in any moment of anger or stupidity, whether in her or him

She was saying, " It's other people who complicate things—

MAKE WRITING YOUR HOBBY THIS YEAR

You have seen the papers and magazines steadily increasing in size. Soon they will be free from all restrictions. There are more than 1,000 in this country alone. Opportunities for new writers are increasing daily and now is the time to "learn the ropes." If you "have always wanted to write when you had the time," there *can be no better time than now.*

Rewards are high and often they begin during the early stages of the coaching.

Let the LSJ show the way. The London School of Journalism has had 35 years of unbroken leadership throughout the world in training by post—with coaching that is entirely individual. It is the quality of this personal coaching that makes the difference between success and failure, the quality that caused "Truth" to say "The LSJ claims less and achieves more."

Remember that the LSJ was founded under the aegis of that great journalist Lord Northcliffe. It has enjoyed the patronage of many of the famous editors and newspaper proprietors and its present patrons are, Sir Philip Gibbs, K.B.E., and Sir Newman Flower.

The LSJ has courses to help every kind of writer—journalist or story writer—beginner or expert. Its latest Course on TV play writing specially written by Mr. George F. Kerr, formerly drama script editor for the B.B.C. and now script editor in commercial TV, is unique in covering a field hitherto almost unexplored. The famous writer Mr. L. A. G. Strong has prepared the course in English Literature, Mr. J. Hampden Jackson the English History.

If you feel attracted to any form of writing, you should seek the School's advice. The free book "Writing for the Press" makes no extravagant promises but describes moderately the methods of the School and shows how you can enter a field that is open to all The fees are low—advice is free from

Bureau 3

LONDON SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

19 Hertford St., Park Lane, London, W.1.

GROsvenor 8250

"There are LSJ students all over the world."

That girl and then Asherton turning up out of the blue and the storm. They make it easier for one's anger and pettiness, but if you let go—well, then there's no coming back. It starts to build up. You do this. I do that. I've always known this, but it was hard to remember at the moment." Her face lifted a little towards him.

There was nothing more he could say. He pulled her to him. She came with a sudden eagerness and there was a small cry in her throat as he kissed her. Her arms went round him, her fingers digging into him as though momentarily there was a panic in her, a fear of falling away, of being torn from him. He held her trembling body close to him, pulling her back to him. Her head came to his breast and he caressed her hair.

By late afternoon, Rigo had brought up the last of the cargo from the after hold. "All right," said Nick. "We'll call it a day. What's left we can shift ashore tomorrow. We've got plenty of time to get it all stacked on the beach before the lorries come tomorrow night."

Rigo said, "It is all agreed?"

"Yes, Rigo. Tomorrow night at nine the lorries come in . . ."

The next evening when Nick went down to the beach, he could see the piles of cargo silhouetted against the night sky at the mouth of the bay. Close to the fisherman's shelter someone stirred in the darkness. Rigo's voice came softly to him: "Señor?"

"Rigo." He heard the sand crunch underfoot. "Ready?"

"Sí, señor . . ." He heard Rigo's hand slap gently against the stock of his shotgun.

"Are they all up there?"

"Four of them, señor. I was up there a little while ago. The dog barked, but he is shut up in a kennel round the back. Since you went they have not bothered . . ."

"You know the billiard room?"

"I know the house well, señor. It is the best room for us. There is only a door. No window. And it runs back into the hill slope."

"All right. Let's go."

They climbed up from the beach and began to follow the path to the villa. Halfway there, Nick halted. "Is your gun loaded, Rigo?"

"Yes, señor . . ." He could hear the edge in Rigo's voice. He broke his own gun and took the two shells out.

"Unload it, Rigo. We don't want any accidents."

In the darkness he heard Rigo unload.

The gate into the courtyard was locked. Rigo gave Nick a boost to the top and then Nick reached down and pulled Rigo up. They dropped quietly into a flower bed on the far side. Leading the way, Nick skirted the courtyard, the gentle sound of water cascading came from the unicorn fountain on his left. A little coach lantern shone over the main door.

NEW!

CUT GOLDEN BAR

in a 1-oz airtight tin!

4/9

IT'S AIRTIGHT! Now, in addition to the present range of packings, Cut Golden Bar is available in a new 1-oz airtight tin. This means that your ounce of Cut Golden Bar will come to you factory-fresh, under an airtight seal. When you break the seal, this handy-size tin will still keep your tobacco at its best.

1-oz airtight tin 4/9
In flake form or ready for your pipe

CB12A

Nick stopped below the verandah and whispered to Rigo, " Slip round the back to the terraced garden and cut the telephone wires. I'll wait for you here."

After a while he heard Rigo breathing at his side. Together they went up to the door. What he was going to do now was as illegal as it could be. Crazy. But that wasn't going to stop him. In his place Manasco would have done the same; and Manasco, he guessed, was as ready to damn consequences now as he was.

He turned the handle of the door gently and eased it open. He slid round it with Rigo following, pressed close up against his back. The hall was well lit, bright-coloured rugs on the gay tiles and a cluster of green and blue lamp lustres hanging from the ceiling. From the far end of the hall he heard voices—Manasco and Guido —and then the click of billiard balls.

Rigo nudged him and pointed: the door of the billiard room was partly open. Keeping close to the side of the hall, Nick went forward to the door and, looking through the crack where it was swung part open on its hinges, he saw Manasco and Guido alone in the room.

Motioning to Rigo to stay on guard, he crossed the hall to a leather-padded door, studded with copper rivets, and pushed it gently. He edged round it and it closed behind him with a little gasp of air.

The manservant was sitting at a table, close to the stove, and he was writing a letter. He looked up, the corner of his tongue showing between his lips.

Raising the barrel of the shotgun, Nick said deliberately, " If you shout or make a noise, I'll shoot."

Nick tipped his head towards the leather door. " Move out and go into the billiard room. And remember—no noise."

The man stood up slowly, and absently slipped a piece of blotting-paper over his letter. Nick stood aside and the manservant moved into the hall.

Rigo came a few steps towards them, his dark face serious, and took the man's arm. With a sudden jerk, he tugged him backwards and pushed him through the door. There was a surprised shout from inside. Rigo pulled the door and turned the key in the lock.

" Where is Juana? " said Nick quickly. " You stay here and watch the front door. I'll find her."

" Upstairs," said Rigo. " Second door on the right. I saw a light there as I went round for the telephone wires. It's her bedroom."

Nick turned. Giving no heed now to noise, he raced up the wide run of carpeted stairs. As he reached the first floor he saw a door open ahead of him. A wedge of light struck brightly across the dimly lit passage.

He ran down to the door, his feet noiseless on the thick carpet. As he came into the light she was standing back just inside the room. He put his hands on each side of the door frame, barring the way, and they faced one another in silence.

TAKE UP PELMANISM

The Grasshopper Mind

YOU know the people with "Grasshopper Minds" as well as you know yourself. Their minds nibble at everything and master nothing.

At home in the evening they tune in the radio or television—tire of it—then glance through a magazine—can't get interested. Finally, unable to concentrate on anything, they either go to the pictures or fall asleep in the chair. At their work they always take up the easiest job first, put it down when it gets hard and start something else. Jump from one thing to another all the time.

Reduced Fees for H.M. Forces.

There are thousands of these people with "Grasshopper Minds" in the world. In fact, they are the very people who do the world's most tiresome tasks and get but a pittance for their work. They do the world's clerical work and the routine drudgery. Day after day, year after year—endlessly—they hang on to the jobs that are smallest-salaried, longest-houred, least interesting, and poorest-futured!

Remember—Everything you do is preceded by your attitude of mind.

What Can You Do About It?

Take up Pelmanism now! A course of Pelmanism brings out the mind's latent powers and develops them to the highest point of efficiency.

Pelmanism banishes such weaknesses and defects as Mind-Wandering, Inferiority and Indecision which interfere with the effective working powers of the mind, and in their place develops strong, positive, vital qualities such as Optimism, Concentration, and Reliability, all qualities of the utmost value in any walk of life.

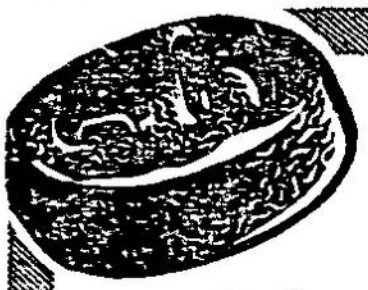
The Pelman Course is simple and interesting; you can enrol on the most convenient terms. The Course is described in *The Science of Success* which will be sent, gratis and post free, on application to:

PELMAN INSTITUTE

166, Norfolk Mansions, Wigmore Street, London, W.1.

WELbeck 1411

PELMAN (OVERSEAS) INSTITUTES: DELHI, 10, *Alipore Road. MELBOURNE*, 396, *Flinders Lane. DURBAN, Natal Bank Chambers* (*P.O. Box* 1489). *PARIS*, 176, *Boulevard Haussmann. AMSTERDAM, Prinsengracht* 1021.



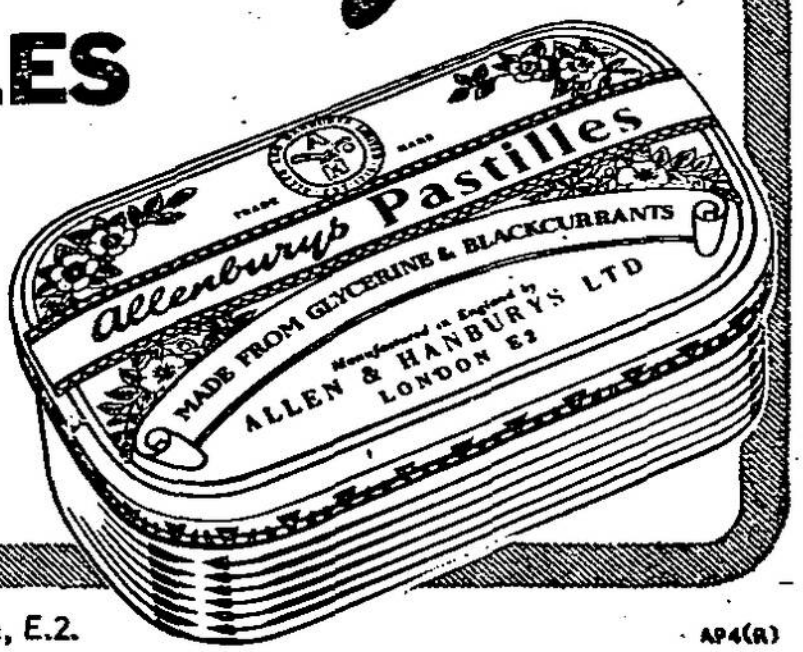
For your throat...

Allenburys

PASTILLES

Made from Glycerine and Blackcurrants

In tins From all Chemists **1/9**



Made by Allen & Hanburys Ltd., London, E.2.

AP4(R)

Cussons

His Imperial Leather

Cussons Imperial Leather is the choice of men of fame and men of promise. It is the choice of men of good taste.

After Shave Talc

Price 3/6

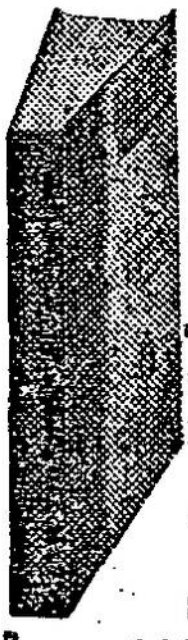
Lather Shave Cream

Large tube 2/6

FREE!

TO AMBITIOUS ENGINEERS

Full details of the easiest and quickest way to prepare for A.M.I.Mech.E., A.M.S.E., CITY & GUILDS (Electrical, etc.), L.I.O.B., Gen. Cert. of Education, etc., on "NO PASS—NO FEE" terms. This valuable Guide outlines the widest range of Home Study Courses in all branches of Engineering—Mechanical, Electrical, Civil, Aero., Auto., Radio, Television, Building, Production, etc., and is full of helpful information. If you are earning less than £15 a week you cannot afford to miss reading "ENGINEERING OPPORTUNITIES." Send for your copy today—FREE and without obligation.



POST COUPON NOW

Please send me FREE Handbook.

NAME .....
(Block letters please).

ADDRESS .....

.....

Subject or Exam .....

B.I.E.T., 191c, COLLEGE HOUSE
29-31 Wright's Lane, London, W.8.

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

TWO FREE BOOKS FOR NEW WRITERS

Would you like to write articles, stories, radio scripts, etc., in your spare time, and sell what you write? If so, you should at once send for "SALEABLE WRITING" and "PLOTTING MADE EASY," two valuable books that will give you some "inside" knowledge about writing for pleasure and profit!

BRILLIANTLY "DIFFERENT"

"PLOTTING MADE EASY" is a manual for fiction writers which solves all plotting problems and teaches a really successful method. "SALEABLE WRITING" is forthright and honest, and in addition to much other interesting information, gives details of our modern Home Study Courses in Journalism and Fiction Writing. Both books FREE and without obligation from:—

Dept. of JOURNALISM,
BRITISH TUTORIAL INSTITUTE
B.T.I. 591, COLLEGE HOUSE
29-31, Wright's Lane, London, W.8

A blue dressing-gown was open loosely over her pyjamas; her face was pink and glowing, and there was a small towel wrapped around her head. She had been washing her hair. Just for the moment he was full of sympathy for her, hating himself. He said, " The others are locked in the billiard room. You must join them."

Calmly she said, " So that's it."

" Yes."

" And if I refuse to go? "

" I don't think you will."

" Why? "

" Because you wouldn't want me to carry you down."

She moved, drawing the dressing-gown close about her. " No, I wouldn't want you to touch me."

He stood aside and she came out. As she passed him he could smell the sweet fragrance of her hair and she carried herself proudly, not looking at him. He followed her, angry with himself, bitter against the clumsiness of being human.

At the bottom of the stairs Rigo stood aside for her. Someone was banging on the far side of the billiard-room door. Nick slipped ahead of her and turned the key, pulling the door back. Guido and the manservant fell back from it. Guido, a billiard cue raised, butt-end towards Nick, lunged at him. Nick caught the end and twisted it away. Juana moved past him into the room and stood by Manasco.

Nick stood in the doorway, his shotgun held low. Guido and the manservant went back until they were touching the end of the billiard table. From the gloom above the green-shaded lights the four faces floated on different levels, silent, watching him. Manasco held a cigar between his lips, the blue smoke drifting in a thin signal across his forehead. His grip on the cigar gave a bitter grimacing turn to his mouth. He took the cigar from his mouth and the wrinkled face moved slowly to calmness.

Nick said, " I have twenty lorries coming up here very shortly. They will use your road, and by early morning we shall have the cargo away. Until then you must be kept here. I offer you all my apologies, though I think you will understand that the necessity for this has not been entirely of my making."

" Pretty speech," Guido sneered.

" Guido! " Manasco flicked the word like a whip-lash. Then raising his hands, spreading the fingers wide as though he lifted a weight, he said to Nick, " You must feel good, Señor Thorne. You have done what you said you would do. Oh yes, I know well how you feel. But—" his hands collapsed suddenly as though he had dropped the invisible load—" no deal is sound until the cheque is cashed."

Nick stepped back. " Rigo will be outside on guard, and we shall barricade the door. You have wine "—his eyes rested on a decanter and glasses on a small table— " and it is not cold."

" And a little fasting hurts no one," said Manasco. " Good night, señor."

Nick stepped back through the door, pulled it shut, and then locked it. He turned to Rigo. " I don't think they'll try to break out but we'll make sure."

They shifted a heavy chest in front of the door, and Rigo found a couple of planks at the back of the house which they wedged against the projecting iron studs of the door. It was a good stout door and it would take more than billiard cues to batter it down.

Nick reached the padlocked gate across the road just as the first lorry headlights turned distantly out of the narrow gorge which formed the entrance to the valley above the Cala Boquer farmhouse. With the barrel of his shotgun he levered off the padlock fastening and swung the gate wide open.

The chain of lights came lurching and crawling towards him. As the first lorry neared the gate he stepped out into the lights and raised his arms.

Someone jumped down from the cab as the lorry halted and Kate ran to him, flinging herself into his arms. " Nick! " His face was against hers, his arms around her, and he could feel her body trembling.

Over her head he saw the other lorries close up. Another figure came forward. It was Domingo Peroni, wrapped in a belted raincoat, his face grey and large under the lights. He cocked his head towards the far villa. " Well? "

" They're all bottled up," said Nick. " We can get to work. What do these drivers know? "

" Nothing. That is, nothing I've told them. But I think they guess a lot—and they don't seem to mind. By the way, I could only get eighteen."

" That'll do."

" Let's get started then."

Kate got back into the cab of the leading lorry. Standing on the running-board, Nick led it at the head of the convoy up to the beach.

At the back of the low cliff overhang there was a wide piece of broken ground big enough to take all the lorries. Two lorries were driven up on either flank to shine their headlights onto the cargo piled on the beach. The plan was that one by one the other lorries should drive up to the head of the small track down to the beach, turn, and be loaded by gangs of the drivers manhandling cases and crates up from the shore. Nick formed the eighteen drivers into three gangs, two on the beach, and one on the clifftop loading. They worked hard, needing no driving.

Kate rowed out to the *Maria* and brought back her stores of coffee. She built a fire on the beach and when the gangs rested, there was coffee or wine for them. They worked, singing and shouting, their shadows thrown long across the pale sands by the headlights.

As each lorry was loaded, it was driven back onto the road and halted. Slowly the loaded convoy began to take form. Nick saw

that if this rate was kept up they could be away by nine o'clock.

Then as they began work on the last lorry, Nick said to Peroni, "All right. As soon as this one's loaded, you move off." He looked down at the beach. There was little more than half a load left for the last lorry. "Take Kate with you. I'm going up to join Rigo. I'll let Manasco out and face him when I see you're well away."

"Nick, I should stay with you." Kate, grubby and untidy from the night, stood at his side.

"No, you go with Domingo." He put his arm round her and kissed her.

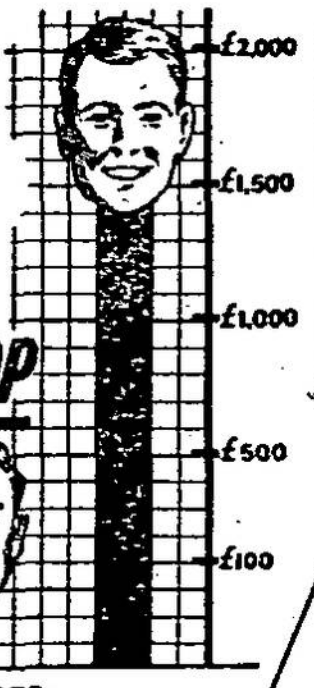
He stayed until they had almost loaded the lorry; then with a wave to Kate he turned and began to walk up to the villa.

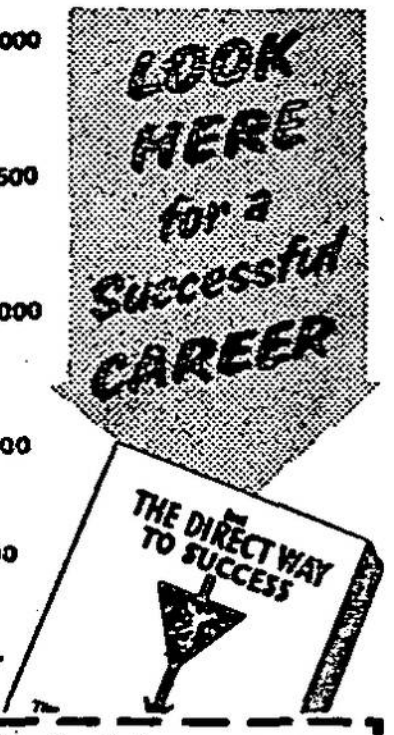
The sun was up now, strong in the clear sky. To his left the bay was dancing with silver chips of light as a strong breeze ruffled the waters. He went slowly, suddenly tired, and for the moment lost to all feeling of triumph.

He'd done it: been awkward, stubborn, and fought his way through. Manasco was beaten. There could still be trouble, he might spend a few months in gaol . . . but in the end he would go back to England with Kate.

Crossing the courtyard, he raised his eyes to the slopes behind the house which Manasco had terraced into a garden. Olive and fig trees, lines of pimento, and here and there an odd almond

What is YOUR Salary Ceiling?





The trained men rise while the untrained

ook around you at the people you know. Those iat have been in the same jobs for years on end at the same pay. And those that have forged iead, some to the very top. What is the differ-ice? It isn't just luck, it isn't just personality. redominantly it is QUALIFICATIONS—the iow-how of the trained man to do the right ing, at the right time, in the right way.

he School of Accountancy's Home-Study Courses pro-ide the very qualifications you know you need, if you are ally to get on. Thousands of past students occupy sponsible well-paid positions as *Directors*, *Managers*, *ccountants*, *Secretaries*, *Cost Accountants* etc.

OPPORTUNITY

hey did not WAIT for opportunity. They made sure they uld hold down a bigger job. Make the first move NOW, to ve YOURSELF a new deal. Write for this free book. It will en your eyes to what can be done—it will tell you where the ospects are brightest, WHERE you can get, and HOW to get ere. Let the few seconds spent in filling out the coupon be ur first investment in yourself—*it will pay handsome dividends.*

The School of Accountancy
160 Regent House
6 Norfolk Street
London, W.C.2

The School of Accountancy
160 Regent House, 6 Norfolk St.
Strand, London, W.C.2

Please send me free your 100 p. book "The Direct Way to Success"

Name _____

Address _____

_____

tree . . . all neat and orderly. Then along the top of one of the terrace walls he saw a quick brown movement. He stopped. A brownish figure slipped between two trees, crouched, and then straightened to pull itself to the top of a wall.

It was Manasco.

Nick ran for the house. He jerked open the main door and looked down the hallway. Rigo, sitting in his chair, turned his head. Beyond him the billiard-room door was secure. Without waiting to give any explanation, Nick swung out onto the verandah. He ran round to the back. A small rockery faced the slope. He climbed up it and saw quickly how Manasco had escaped.

Somewhere at the back of the billiard room in the ceiling was a small ventilation shaft. On top of the rockery was an iron grid about eighteen inches square, which had been pushed back. Nick guessed that his prisoners had spent the night widening it from the inside. Manasco was small and could get through easily.

Looking up between the olive trees, Nick saw Manasco break from the garden and begin to run along the side of the valley, keeping close in to the foot of the hills. He began to run after him, swearing to himself. There was plenty Manasco could still do.

He could phone the police from the Cala Boquer farm and he could borrow a shotgun and hold the convoy up at the narrow defile that formed the entrance to the valley.

Manasco would shoot, too. No empty shotgun threat for him.

" Increased my income by 50% " writes S.I. (Ayr)

KNOW-HOW

BRINGS YOU WRITING SUCCESS

LEARN how to write saleable stories and articles how to obtain acceptance from leading Magazines and newspapers . . . how to write and enjoy extra income and esteem. Simply study the " KNOW-HOW " Technique and you'll Know-How to write to sell.

★ *" I have sold a story, thanks to your help and criticism. I sent a story to WOMAN'S ILLUSTRATED, one which has been revised according to your instructions . . . I have received the cheque for fifteen guineas." K. K. (Eire).*

★ *" My article sold first time out to WEEKEND MAIL for eight guineas. Thanks a heap for the suggestions where to mail and the corrections." R. W. (Dover).*

Practical results obtained by discerning beginners who sent for "The Know-How Guide to Writing Success." The original letters may be seen at any time at our offices.

Your success is certain—once you "KNOW-HOW"

FREE Send today for your copy H63 of " The Know-How Guide." Read how YOU can gain acceptance cheques. NO SALES—NO FEES TUITION. There is no obligation. Write now to :—

B.A. SCHOOL OF SUCCESSFUL WRITING LTD
(The British American School)
124, New Bond Street, London, W.1
YOU ARE WELCOME TO CALL

The drivers were on Nick's side, but they'd never try to pass an angry Manasco-with a gun.

It was a long run to the defile and Nick put everything into it. Loose stones skidded and clattered away from under his feet. The sun smacked hard at his neck and the tiredness in him from the night's work made his legs seem leaden. Climbing the wall that ran down to the road gate, he saw Manasco look round. From the spurt the man put on he knew that he had been seen. Old man Manasco was fit, and he ran with the promise of triumph in him.

Manasco reached the road and Nick saw the brown shape clear against the pale grey jumble of rocks that closed in on the track. To his surprise, instead of following the road through the defile, Manasco suddenly swerved to the left and began to climb up the face of the rocks. They were about a hundred feet high and he went up them like a goat. His figure was silhouetted against the skyline at the top of the rocks and then it disappeared.

Nick hit the road fifty yards from the throat of the valley. Behind him he could hear the low sound of the convoy beginning to make its way down the road. The shadow of the tall gorge sides closed over him. He swung off the road and climbed up the route Manasco had taken. As he pulled himself over the top he saw Manasco.

He was sitting on a boulder near the overhanging lip of the defile. A hundred feet below him was the road and thirty feet away the other side of the gorge. His shoulders were hunched over his knees and he was breathing heavily. He raised his head at the sound of Nick's feet on the hard rock. For a moment his teeth were bared as he smiled, the old face wrinkled and brown, and the blue eyes dancing behind the spectacles.

Very slowly he pulled himself upright. He raised his right hand and Nick saw that he held a revolver.

" I told you, Señor Thorne— You remember, I told you—" Manasco's need for breath broke his words—" no deal is sound until the cheque is cashed."

The index finger of his left hand flicked stiffly sideways. A few feet from him a loose coil like a long white worm snaked across the rock and disappeared into a crack six feet from the edge of the fall. The end of the fuse length was already smoking and spluttering quietly.

His voice almost friendly, Manasco went on, " We'd better get off here. It has about three minutes to go . . ." He raised his eyes and looked seawards up the valley. The convoy was coming down the rough road, the head already near the boundary gate. " They'll still be half a mile away when it happens. And when it does, nothing will go out of here for weeks. I understand gun-cotton, you know. I've used it so much for making my terraces. Now go, and I will follow."

Nick glanced towards the lorries. He could see Manasco climbing out of the ventilator grid, sure of himself, the last card in his hand, slipping into his garage for gun-cotton, even into his

study through the window for a revolver . . . And he thought, I'd have done just what he's done. Although he could find no anger in him against the man, he knew that he was not capable now of turning and climbing down.

He took a step forward.

Manasco lifted the gun a little. "I'm a serious man, Señor Thorne. I shall shoot."

"We must both do what we have to do."

He jumped forward, reaching for Manasco. Manasco stepped back, away from him, and fired.

The bullet smashed into Nick's left shoulder. Pain went through him. An expanding burst of colour splashed violently across his eyeballs. He twisted round and crashed heavily to the ground. As he lay there his mind and his senses were for one moment wonderfully clear, hearing the rocking surge of echoes from the shot beating free from the high walls of the defile, and seeing Manasco standing over him. Sharp in his nostrils was the acrid smell of the burning fuse.

"I said I was serious." Manasco stepped towards Nick. "Come, I'll help you down . . ." There was regret in his voice, sadness, and the compassion that is stirred by victory.

Nick drew his hand away from his shoulder and his fingers were wet with his blood. The movement sent a stab of pain through his arm. Anger came with the return of pain. He rolled over on the ground, flung his right arm out, and caught at Manasco's legs. The man came down in a heap on him and he saw the revolver fall and slide away. He rolled over the man, pinning him down while he kicked and struggled under him.

He reached out for the fuse length. He pulled it to him, holding the burning end, clamping it into his palm and clenching his fingers round it. In his rage, determined to be sure, he seized it in his teeth, biting and tearing at it, all his movements furious with the sharp spur of pain from his shoulder.

The fuse parted in his mouth. Spitting the bits from his lips and teeth, he fought with Manasco. They were both shouting, swearing, and twisting.

He got his arm tight round the man's neck, forcing him down and, with his face pressed against Manasco's back, clung on to him. He stayed like that, fastened to him, and he heard the noise of the first lorry roar into the defile, heard the grind of gears and the high whine of engines as they drew more power for the rise of the road . . .

He counted them, lost count, and waited for the noise of their passing to die. It seemed to him as though it would go on for ever . . . great waves of engine noise dying and swelling and matching the surge and fall of pain in his body. The noise faded, and a heavy, hot stillness swept across him. He fell away, conscious only of a great tiredness.

Kate was there. The sun striking into the room made the silhouette of her body a soft shape under the white silk of her dress.

She'd always been there, in the last few days, when he had come to and found himself fully conscious for a fleeting moment. But now he was through and knew he wasn't going to slip back into oblivion. His arm and part of his shoulder was in plaster and there was a dull ache somewhere under the plaster.

He said, " Kate . . ." She turned and came towards him, the sun now putting an aureole of pale flame around her fair hair. He smiled at her. She put out a hand and touched his face, then bent and kissed him gently on the lips.

" Darling . . ." She sat on the side of the bed and looked at him, her hand moving up and resting lightly on his.

" What happened? "

" Up there? "

" Yes."

" It was three days ago. The bullet smashed a bone. But there was a broken artery too. You could have died. We didn't know it then. But he did . . ."

" Manasco? "

" Yes. He fixed you up with a tourniquet but he didn't say anything to us. Only to the local police who came up the valley just after the lorries went through."

" Manasco saved my life? "

" Yes. He also saved himself from—well, I don't know what charge."

" Where is he now? "

" He's gone. I don't know where—South America . . . Somewhere on business."

" Is he bringing any charges against me? "

"No . . . But you've got to go, as soon as possible, out of Spain. That's official."

He opened his eyes and saw Kate looking at him and he could tell that she was near to tears because he was conscious again and she no longer had to go on frightening herself as she must have done in the last three days.

She said, " You're all right? "

He nodded. " Yes, darling." He put out his good arm and slid it round her waist. Suddenly she came down to him, her face hiding itself in his chest, and he felt her shaking a little with affectionate anger, kissing him and crying too, and he heard her saying, " Oh, you men . . . you men! "

Nick's arm slid up and the bandaged palm of his right hand cupped Kate's shoulder and he held her to him firmly.

Manasco Road, by Victor Canning, is to be published in June by Hodder & Stoughton

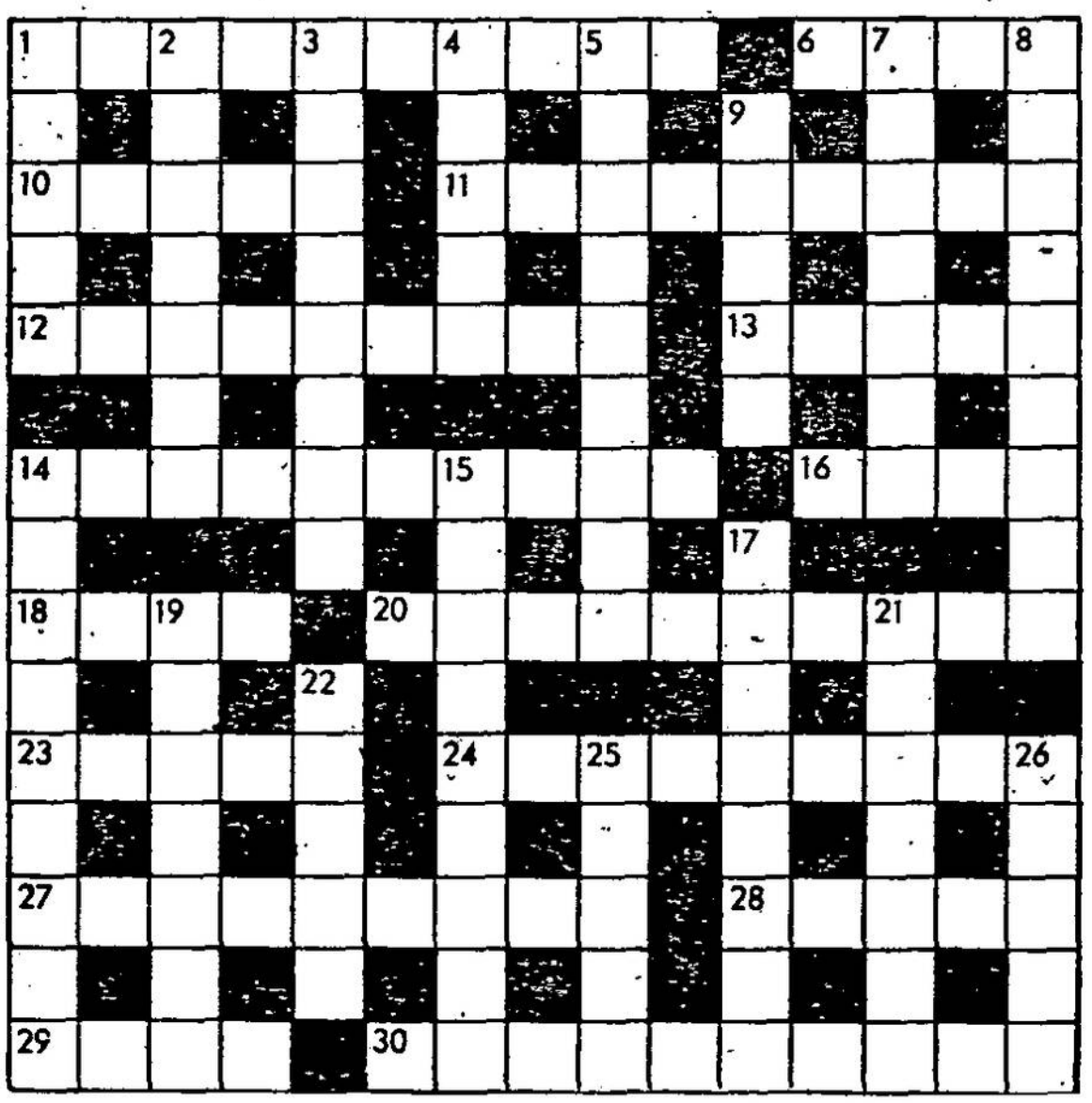
★ **H. E. BATES's brilliant new short novel Death of a Huntsman appears complete in next month's ARGOSY, on sale March 8**

ARGOSY CROSS-WORD

★

Solution on Page 110

★



CLUES

Across

1 Is he at the head of the column ? (10).

6 A period in the organ-loft (4).

10 R.L.S.'s was black (5).

11 Fail the lad in his exams? How rustic! (9).

12 Start a subscription or start the ship tilting (4, 1, 4).

13 The walking-on player's special (5).

14 Intoxicated puppet in the ring (5-5).

16 Torment, but it's alluring (4).

18 Tidy ox (4).

20 A virtuous seaman ? (4, 6).

23 Traditionally get along with crooks (5).

24 I, dire soul, might be raving (9).

27 Titania was, of an ass (9).

28 "—— in the moon the long road lies" (Housman) (5).

29 Predominantly negative tie-up (4).

30 A real and a theatrical monarch make this humorist (6, 4).

Down

1 Fast teacher ? (5).

2 Relate to muddled painter (7).

3 Drag the footways ? Try the river (3-5).

4 Sauce to a Greek letter from Fra Filippo (5).

5 Rend those letters and get the answer (9).

7 Mrs. Twitchit (7).

8 This official's the reverse of what the employee does (9).

9 Remorse losing its head gets the bird (5).

14 Steal a stream—it's not very valuable (9).

15 Command in a rush —same again (9).

17 Feelings lacerated at a good school (8).

19 The pear sounds legal abroad (7).

21 Treat a celebrity thus and make a beast of him (7).

22 Member for Plymouth like a Dartmoor peak (5).

25 She languished for Sheridan (5).

26 Bullock with a sense of direction (5).

THE FAMOUS

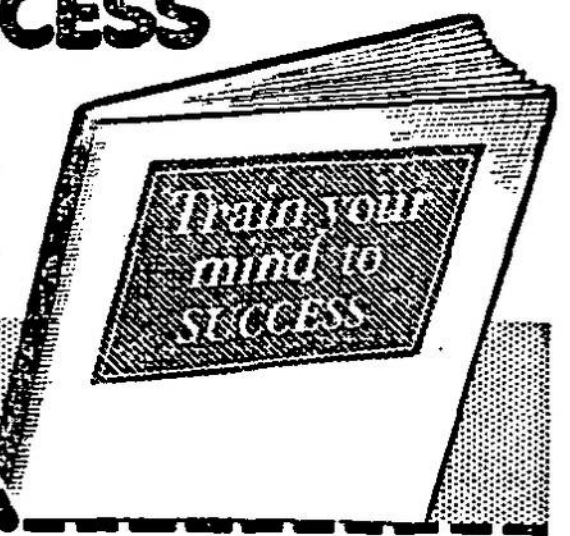
BENNETT COLLEGE

can train your mind to SUCCESS

THROUGH PERSONAL POSTAL TUITION

A FREE book vital to your career !

Read how the famous Bennett College can help you to success ! Send now for this recently published FREE book, "Train your mind to SUCCESS," which tells you about The Bennett College proven success in postal tuition . . . and how it can help you to success in your career.



WHAT CAREER DO YOU WANT?

Building	Accountancy Exams.
Carpentry	Auctioneer's Exams.
Commercial Art	Book-keeping
Diesel Engines	General Education
Draughtsmanship	Journalism
Electrical Eng.	Languages
Mechanical Eng.	Mathematics
Motor Engineering	Police Subjects
Quantity Surveying	Salesmanship
Radio Eng.	Secretarial Exams.
Surveying	Shorthand
Telecommunications	Short Story Writing
Television	and many others
Textiles	

GENERAL CERT. OF EDUCATION

FREE

To The Bennett College (Dept. C. 144N), Sheffield

Please send me, without obligation, a free copy of 'Train your mind to SUCCESS' and the College Prospectus on :

SUBJECT .....

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

AGE (*if under 21*) . . . . *Please write in Block letters*

---

or pleasure and profit. Learn the P.A.S. way. Pupils of all ages find these Postal Courses beer joy, easy, inexpensive nd with big possibilities. "Punch" stone has bought ver 4,000 Pupils' sketches. One Pupil writes :—"*bu r the Press Art School I would have missed what is now e most important thing in my life.*" Courses for eginners and Advanced Students. Specimen drawing ill receive free helpful criticism. Write for free lustrated prospectus to Percy V. Bradshaw, Principal.

THE PRESS ART SCHOOL LTD.
ept. As.7) Tudor Hall, Forest Hill, S.E.33

BM/BOOK

STORIES WANTED

by the **British Institute of Fiction-Writing Science Ltd., Regent House. Regent Street. W1.** Suitable stories are revised by us and submitted to editors on a 15 per cent of sales basis. Unsuitable stories are returned with reasons for rejection. Address your MS to Dept. C.25.

FREE : *The Professional Touch*, concerning our Courses and Criticism, from Dept. C.25.

The sign of SCIENCE & SALES

LANGUAGE PROBLEM SOLVED

By the *Pelman* Method

THE problem of learning a Foreign Language in half the usual time has been solved.

The Pelman method enables you to learn languages without any of the usual drudgery. You learn French in French, German in German, Spanish in Spanish, and Italian in Italian. English is not used at all.

Grammatical complexities are eliminated. You pick up the grammar almost unconsciously as you go along. There are no classes to attend.

The Pelman method of learning languages is explained in four little books, one for each language :

French, Spanish, German, Italian.
(*Also Courses in Afrikaans and Urdu*).

You can have a free copy of any one of these books, together with a specimen lesson, by sending for it to-day. *WELbeck 1411*

POST THIS FREE COUPON TO-DAY

Pelman Languages Institute, 166, Norfolk Mansions, Wigmore St., London, W 1.

Please send details of Pelman method of learning : French, German, Spanish, Italian
(*Cross out three of these*)

Name .....

Address .....

Pelman (Overseas) Institutes: Delhi, Melbourne, Durban Paris, Amsterdam

MAKE WRITING YOUR OTHER BUSINESS

Enjoy the Security of an EXTRA Income

MOST successful Writers did not begin their working lives as Authors. Thousands of Stories and Articles are by people who write in addition to their regular occupation. They write for the deep pleasure of writing; for the security an additional income provides. Writing gives young people another string to the bow; enables retired folk to capitalise their experiences.

GREAT OPPORTUNITIES EVERY DAY

OVER 1,300 Daily and Weekly Newspapers, and more than 2,000 Magazines and Periodicals in Great Britain alone, means at least 100,000 separate issues per year requiring Articles, Stories, etc., a large proportion of which has to be Free-Lance Work. Here are immense and permanent Markets for capable Writers, with opportunities never greater than now—new Publications appearing, the Public reading more than ever, and British Editors constantly on the lookout for new Writers. Anyone of average education and ability, willing to learn the technique of preparing written matter in saleable form, has great opportunities of profitable and continuous spare time employment, which can lead to well-paid full time occupation.

Practical Help by Expert Advice and Direction

FLEET STREET SCHOOL gives modern practical instruction which enables the new Writer to produce Work in the form wanted by busy Editors (who have no time to teach the Novice) and guides the Learner to the Markets best suited to his personal ability. The continued success of our Students is striking proof for the new practical methods of the Advisory Panel of Fleet Street Authors and Editors, whose qualifications as Professional Experts are indicated below.

The Panel of Experts

1. Author of over 1,000 Short Stories. 2. Editor of a best-selling Women's Magazine. 3. A prolific Writer of Serials in famous English Journals. 4. The Writer of popular Girls' Stories. 5. Regular Contributor to all the best-selling Juvenile Periodicals. 6. Feature Writer to Sunday Newspapers. 7. Sub-Editor of National Daily.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP NOW.—Write for Free Copy of "PROSPECTS FOR AUTHORSHIP" and learn how to acquire the Professional touch and essential Marketing knowledge. Remember, the Fleet Street School system is based on earning whilst learning. Special terms are available for those of limited means.

THE FLEET STREET SCHOOL LTD

(Desk A24) 1 & 2 Fulwood Place
High Holborn, London WC1

(A stamp for reply appreciated but not essential)

PRACTICAL RESULTS

Student 357/3015: I have had my story accepted by **BLACKWOODS** who are paying me £25 for it. . *Student* 778/2119: I thought it might interest you to know that **THE COUNTRYMAN** has accepted a short article of mine on an old country custom . . . *Student* 184/315: As you suggested, I submitted the articles to the **NEW STATESMAN**. One was published on the 17th July. I have also had an article accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . . *Student* 181/282: You may be interested to hear that I had a letter from the Editor of **ARGOSY**; they offered me Twenty-five Guineas for my story . . . *Student* 591/287: You will be pleased that my article submitted for my Second Lesson was published in the **DAILY MIRROR** and I received Six Guineas for it . . . *Student* 120/288: I have established contact with the Editor of **PUNCH**. The item was accepted for "Charivaria" and is a good start . . . *Student* 1179/347: I succeeded in getting four Big Game stories into **COURIER** and another about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared in the August issue of **BLACKWOODS** . . . *Student* 1954/157 I have just corrected a proof of my story for **WIDE WORLD**: they have since accepted another and I have sent in a third . . . *Student* 171/162: I have sold my story to **EVERYWOMAN** for 2 guineas . . . *Student* 1106/156 The B.B.C. accepted the script for the Light Programme—fee 9 guineas—after my first lesson . . . *Student* 141/76 The article which I wrote for the Second Test paper appeared in the **SUNDAY MAIL**. Thanks for the recommendation